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THE HEIR OF ARDENNAN.

A STORY OF DOMESTIC LIFE
IN SCOTLAND.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "ANNE DYSART."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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TO
CAPTAIN PRINGLE HOME DOUGLAS, R.N.

AND
MRS. DOUGLAS,

This Story
IS MOST AFFECTIONATELY AND GRATEFULLY
INSCRIBED.

BY
THEIR DAUGHTER,

C. J. D.

THE HEIR OF ARDENNAN.

CHAPTER I.

"AGNES!" said Major Irvine, rising and laying down his newspaper, while he sighed gently.

"Dear papa!" replied his eldest daughter, with one glance up from an immense worsted embroidery-frame, over which she was bending, while rose, lily, and convolvulus seemed to grow as if by magic beneath the unwearied hand and eye of the industrious needlewoman.

"I was just thinking, Agnes, how we shall miss our darling Carry when she goes to Locharroch."

"We shall, indeed," Agnes answered, as, raising her head for the first time for three hours, and with her needle half pushed through the canvas, she suspended her labours for a few seconds, while a tear trembled in her small, gentle, light grey eye. "Dear Caroline! I hope she will enjoy herself."

"Now that the time begins to draw near, I can hardly bear the thought of parting with her; but it will be such a pleasure to your brother and his wife to have her with them, and the visit has been so long promised, that it must not be longer delayed. Moreover, it is time now that Caroline should see a little of the world. She has such wonderful intelligence and observation, is so much beyond her years in every way, that it would be very wrong to deprive her of any advantage in our power. No young person that I ever knew so likely to make the most of every opportunity to improve herself as our little Carry."

"Certainly not," replied Agnes,—who had just set to work upon a new leaf, as if she were labouring for her daily bread;

“ Carry is so clever. Did you remark, papa, the other night at the Manse, when Mr. Williamson proposed that difficult arithmetical puzzle, how quickly she found it out? Everybody seemed quite surprised and delighted. I saw what they all thought of her.”

“ Ah! she is just like her mother, my poor, poor Caroline;” and the Major sighed deeply. “ It would be such a disappointment to John and Catherine if she did not go this year; and though the dear child says little about it, I rather think she wishes to go herself. One must not be selfish, Agnes. I think we must make up our minds at once to her going.”

The Major said all this in a tone of persuasion, as if he were endeavouring by gentle argument to convince himself of the necessity of permitting his daughter's departure.

“ I quite agree with you, papa,” replied Agnes,—her fingers moving as nimbly as ever, though her lip perceptibly trembled; “ and the sooner the decision is made the better, as there will be a good deal to get ready for her before she goes. She will

require some warmer dresses, as those muslins of hers will never do for the Highlands; at least, she will only be able to wear them now and then. And then, thick shoes, and a large straw bonnet, a travelling-cloak, and I must work her a carriage-bag, they are so useful for carrying refreshments and anything you may happen to want. Only it is no use setting about things till one is quite sure they will be needed. It is time now, however, to prepare if she is to go, as it is getting on to the end of June."

"She *is* to go, certainly. I have quite made up my mind about that; and you know, Agnes, when once my mind is made up, I never change it. Indecision is insufferable to me; I cannot endure it in others, and, thank God! I am never guilty of it myself. It was only about the *time* of your sister's going, I was thinking. I wonder when it will be most convenient for Catherine and John. Let Caroline write to Catherine to-morrow, and fix the middle or end of next month, whichever may be most convenient for John to meet her at Perth."

And having given utterance to this desire with an air of determination, Major Irvine rested his fingers on the newspaper, which lay open upon a small table in one of the windows of the drawing-room, and stood looking straight out into the garden, as if he wished to prevent the possibility of his daughter's endeavouring to read his countenance. But if such were his object, he might have spared himself all trouble about the matter, as Agnes, never much of a physiognomist, was too entirely engrossed at this moment with the rival claims of three different shades of green, to think of looking at anything else; though to do her affectionate nature justice, she was thinking far more of her young sister and her approaching absence, than of all the colours, and shades, and contrasts, and matchings in the world. But most reflecting persons have probably noticed that there is frequently in the soul a deep under-current of thought and feeling, while the outward attention, nay, all the active faculties of the mind are occupied about some totally different object. Often, for instance, one can not only apparently,

but really enjoy a laughable anecdote or amusing society, while there is yet in the depths of the heart an unforgotten, ever-present sorrow — a sadness which, however, comes not to the surface, and which can co-exist with much genuine enjoyment, and a measure even of real happiness.

But, let us take the opportunity of the pause in the conversation of the father and daughter, to glance at their outward appearance, and at the aspect of the objects by which they were surrounded.

Major Irvine was an officer in the East India Company's service, and had spent thirty years of the best part of his life beneath the burning sun of Madras and the Deccan; but though now verging towards old age and so long exposed to the effects of a tropical climate and the hardships of a soldier's life, he looked still alert and vigorous. His complexion was bronzed and his features were high, sharp, and deeply marked by the lines of time; but his tall, erect, though spare figure, and his firm and active step gave no evidence of physical decline, while his hazel eyes,

quick and bright as in his early prime of youth and strength, seemed almost to discredit the tale told by the thin silvery hair, which swept back from his bald and high, though neither full nor expansive forehead. His expression and appearance indicated courage, promptitude, and practical activity, rather than intellectual capacity or a large share of moral energy, while his whole air and manner marked at once the soldier and the gentleman. In early life, Major Irvine had fought against Tippoo, the famous Rajah of Mysore, and been present at the siege and fall of Seringapatam. Afterwards he had served under the great Wellington against the Mahrattas, and again been in the field during the southern Mahratta war, and engaged in some of the expeditions against the Pindarrees. He was fond of "fighting his battles o'er again," and telling stories about "the Nizam," and the "Peishwah," and anecdotes of "the Duke—General Wellesley as he was in those days." Major Irvine had been twice married. By his first marriage he had two children, a son who resided on an

estate in the Highlands which he had inherited from his mother, and a daughter to whom the reader has already been introduced. His second wife had left him only one child—Caroline, now just on the confines of womanhood.

Agnes Irvine, the Major's elder daughter, was no longer young—at least not for an unmarried woman. She appeared to be about thirty-five or thirty-six, was tall, thin, fair, and pale, with light eyes, light eyebrows, and light hair. Her other features were small and delicate, but with no pretensions to beauty or even prettiness; while her figure, though undeniably ladylike, could not well be called graceful. She generally wore light greyish or bluish, or yellowish dresses, from a mistaken notion that pale colours suited her complexion. She was generally very silent, and her manner was quiet, gentle, timid, and affectionate, but entirely devoid of warmth or spirit. As to the rest, she was devoted to household economy and needlework, her entire life almost having been spent in making pastry and preserves, keeping the linen in order, and

working over acres of canvas in Berlin wool. No ambitious wish, no anxious intellectual aspiration, no puzzling moral or religious problem had ever disturbed the gentle serenity of her thoughts, or invaded the peaceful monotony of her guileless bosom. By those whose *beau idéal* of the feminine character is amiable and industrious nonentity, Agnes Irvine might have been considered a very model for the sex. By others she might have been deemed insipid. In short, though a good, kind, and *likeable* creature, and no doubt fitted to fill her own place in the economy of Providence, she *was* rather uninteresting, and though nobody disliked her, she had never in her life had either a lover or an admirer. Indeed it is to be doubted if a thought of love or marriage had ever once troubled the every-day, placid current of her thoughts.

Major Irvine had been settled in his present habitation for above twenty years. Wallacefield, for such was its name, was a small and pretty villa, situated about a mile or a mile and a half from a market

town, in one of the most beautiful districts in the lowlands of Scotland. It stood at a little distance from the high-road, with which it communicated by means of an approach of trees, too short to be dignified with the name of avenue. The house was in the cottage style, with a flat roof, and built of polished freestone, the windows and doors being ornamented by pillars of the same material. On the side of the house farthest from the road, and which would have been called the front had the entrance not been on the other, a small lawn, in gentle undulations sloped down towards a broad, beautiful river, clear as crystal, the bank becoming steep as it neared the stream. As you looked up the current, the opposite bank was rocky and precipitous, and overhung by brushwood and by the branches of a few gnarled oaks of great age but unimportant growth. Lower down the river, which made a curve round the grounds of Wallacefield, the shore became gradually flatter, till opposite the house it was formed by a level green meadow, bounded by a semi-circle of trees, beyond which rose in

slopes, corn-fields and woods, with here and there a farm-house. Just where the steep bank merged into the flat one, stood a little thatched cottage, covered with ivy and half hidden by trees. In this direction the view was closed by an island covered with willows, whose long grey branches dipped into the water, and softened with their pale and shadow-like beauty the more brilliant tints of the summer landscape. The lawn was adorned by one spreading horse-chestnut, and one or two walnut and weeping-ash trees, with a few flower-beds cut in the grass. A fruit and vegetable-garden on one side of the house, adorned by an ornamental dovecot, surmounted by a glittering vane, and a paddock on the other for the phæton-horse, and Caroline's cow, "Sonsie Jean," completed the *policy*, as it is called in Scotland, of Wallacefield. It was a beautiful afternoon, about Midsummer, that I have chosen to introduce you to Wallacefield and its inmates, and I can assure you, you could seldom have seen either to greater advantage.

The day had been hot, calm, and cloud-

less. But now the sun was sinking in the sky, and a light breeze had sprung up to mitigate the sultriness of the atmosphere. The evening rays gilded the rocky bank opposite, and the leaves of the oak-trees quivered in the breeze, while the windows of the cottage shone like suns through the green leaves. Cattle stood cooling themselves in the stream. The broad-leaved chestnut threw forward an immense dark shadow. The roses and the lilies glowed in the sunlight, while the last low buzz of the summer-day's ephemera mingled with the hum from the distant town, or the rushing cadence of the river as it fell over the weir or *cauld*, made for the purpose of preventing the salmon, which should come up the stream in a flood, from going down again when the water was shallower. It was, indeed, a glorious summer evening. All nature was steeped in beauty, and every sense of man provided with luxury and enjoyment. Yet Agnes Irvine worked calmly and industriously on, heedless of all its loveliness;—the mimic flowers on her canvas possessed greater charms for her, than the living

roses in the garden. Meanwhile her father, half - abstractedly, half - consciously, was looking out of the window, admiring, not so much the scene as a whole, as the vigorous growth of the chestnut-tree, the fair, unblighted blow of the roses this year, and the extreme smoothness of the neatly shaven lawn. At last, interrupting the somewhat long pause which had ensued on the termination of the conversation recorded above, he abruptly inquired : " But where, I wonder, can Carry be all this time ? What can have become of her ? " The words were yet on his lips when a light, quick step was heard in the hall, and a blithe young voice, half-singing, half-repeating,

" Oh ! my love is like a red red rose
That's newly sprung in June,
Oh ! my love is like a melody
That's sweetly play'd in tune."

And the instant afterwards a young blooming girl tripped into the room.

Caroline Irvine did not look above seventeen. Though by no means low in stature, she was several inches shorter than her sister, with a girlish, imperfectly deve-

loped, yet round figure, which though quick and lively in all its movements, was yet perfectly free from awkwardness or *brusquerie*. She wore a low white dress, which displayed a pair of nice round arms, and a fair comely neck, though neither were perhaps quite plump enough for perfect beauty. Most persons would have thought Caroline pretty, and none could have denied that she was pleasing. In addition to features tolerably well-shaped, she possessed a fair complexion, with a beautiful bloom like the hue of the wild rose, a small sweet mouth, large hazel eyes, bright with spirit and intelligence, and a profusion of rich brown hair, which fell in massy curls on each side of her face, and was fastened behind with a small comb. Her whole appearance bespoke youth, health, happiness, and intelligence. She was the joy of her father's life and the pride of his heart; and altogether, in her natural yet evidently untaught grace of manner, as well as in her complexion, she seemed to deserve the pet appellation he frequently bestowed upon her, of his "sweet wild rose."

"Where have you been, my treasure?" he inquired, his voice and aspect alike expressive of the softness and satisfaction the presence of his young daughter never failed to create.

"I have been seeing Jean milked, papa, and it is so delightful in the field among the buttercups, and the shadows are so long, and the sky is so red, and there is such a pleasant breeze from the water, that I have come in to advise you and Agnes to come out for a saunter before tea. Do come."

"I am afraid, dear," said Agnes, "I cannot come before tea. I have this rose-leaf to finish, and the hooks to sew upon my brown silk gown, and your spotted muslin to mend, and the tea to make, and the bread to cut."

"Peggy will make the tea and cut the bread, and I intend to mend my spotted muslin myself to-morrow morning, and you can sew on your hooks to-night after candles are lighted, when I am reading aloud 'Captain Back's Expedition.'"

"But the rose-leaf——"

"Oh! never mind the rose-leaf."

Agnes rose slowly, sighing while she did

so, picked up her ends of worsted, stuck in her needle with great deliberation, carefully pinned a fine damask napkin over her work, and set her frame in the precise corner in which it was accustomed to stand.

"We spoil you, Caroline," she said with a smile which belied her words.

"We try, at least," said her father. "But we shall not have very many evenings to walk with dear Carry now."

"But I shall not be more than three months away, and three months will soon pass; and I am sure I shall never walk with anybody I love so well as you and Agnes."

They were now in the hall.

"Where are my gloves?" said the Major; "somebody must have taken them away. I never in my life put my gloves anywhere but just beside my hat. This is quite intolerable. You have not seen them, Agnes?"

"No, papa. You have been out twice since I stirred from my seat."

"Ring the bell for Peggy, then. Either she or Phemy must have taken them away."

Agnes obeyed, and Peggy promptly answered the summons.

Peggy was an old servant of the family, having been with the Major ever since his return from India. She belonged to a class of servants once, I have been told, common in Scotland, but of whom only a few specimens are now extant, and these are becoming yearly more rare. Equally simple-minded and kind-hearted, her attachment to the family, of which she regarded herself as a member, was accompanied with a species of veneration sometimes a little absurd in its effects. Whatever any of them said, or did, or thought, must infallibly be right. Had they affirmed that the moon was black, Peggy would most undoubtedly have disbelieved the evidence of her own senses. Yet was she neither a hypocrite nor a flatterer. In the presence of her master and mistress she frequently expressed herself with a freedom which would have astonished and horrified the oily-tongued and smooth-mannered domestic of a fashionable establishment. "Worthy Maister Grieve," the minister whom Peggy "sat

under," was the only human being she deemed at all comparable in point of wisdom with Major Irvine and his daughters. Indeed, in this respect, she considered all four about equal, and never surpassed by mortal wight save Solomon himself. In general Peggy was almost sufficiently punctual, orderly, and methodical to satisfy even the Major. Nothing could well be more unlike her, or indeed any of the household, than to commit such a solecism as to carry off her master's gloves. Even Phemy, Peggy's assistant,—for the latter presided over every department in the household economy,—could hardly be suspected of such a delinquency. To Major Irvine's demand as to what she had done with his gloves, Peggy replied,

"'Deed, sir, I haena seen your gloves; they're where ye pat them for me."

"Phemy must have taken them, then; let her be called."

"Na, sir, it's nae use, it canna hae been Phamy, for she's ne'er been out o' the kitchen, sin' I saw ye wi' them i' the garden; an' it canna hae been Wattie aither,

for he has been mawing and delving ever sin' he got his denner."

"It must have been somebody, I tell you; the gloves could not go away of themselves, and Miss Irvine has been working in the drawing-room for some hours, and it is very unlike Miss Caroline to do anything of that kind."

"Weel, sir, it was not me, though I maun say it's an unco like thing where they can have gane till. Dinna ye think (in a deprecating tone) that aiblins ye may hae pitten them some gate yoursel'?"

"Why, woman, where can I have put them? I am particularly careful always to put them in the ——"

At this moment Caroline, who had vanished a few minutes before, reappeared, bearing triumphantly in her hand the lost gloves.

"Where did you find them?" cried all in a breath.

"On a branch of the variegated holly-tree at the corner," she replied, with a smile and an arch glance at her father.

Like most persons who have only themselves to blame, Major Irvine was at first

disposed to seek relief for his irritated feelings in some cause of displeasure against an other person; but a glance at the joyous countenance of his youthful daughter chased the wrinkles from his brow, and banished every thought of anger from his heart.

“Blessings on her bonny een,” cried Peggy, regarding her young mistress with affectionate pride; “ye see, Maister, Miss Caroline is far cleverer nor ony o’ us; she was aye auld-farrant. Wha but hersel’ wad e’er hae thought o’ looking on the buss?”

“Ah Carry, Carry!” said her father, fondly; then added, “I remember now leaving them there when I carried the trowel to the tool-house. If Wattie had not been so careless as to leave the trowel where it ought not to have been, we might have been spared all this trouble.”

Agnes was now ready, her shawl pinned with all due regard to straightness, and her close straw bonnet neatly tied.

“Come, Carry, dear,” she said, “and get on your things.”

“I am not going to get on any things,

Agnes. That soft cool breeze is so refreshing, blowing about one's head and neck after such a hot, *hot* day; but before we go to the field, papa, let us look at Wattie's improvements in the garden. I see, among other things, he has removed that rose-tree from the west end of the house to the middle of the circular bed I raked so beautifully yesterday morning."

"The d— he has!" cried the Major, thrown quite off his guard by this piece of intelligence, and hastening in the direction in which he supposed he should find the delinquent; "that man is, without exception, the most obstinate fool that——"

"Oh papa!" interrupted Caroline.

"Only yesterday morning," continued the Major, with rather more calmness, "I positively ordered him to let that bush remain where it was; and whatever Mr. Wattie may think, I can tell him I mean to be master in my own house. My orders are not to be disobeyed with impunity, and that I shall let him see."

They were now within sight of Wattie, who was busy transplanting flowers into a

newly-made bed, in the centre of which was a rose-tree. At the sight of the rose-tree Major Irvine's ire blazed forth anew, venting itself on the offending Wattie in unmeasured indignation at his conduct, and peremptory orders immediately to undo his labours. Wattie, however, listened to his incensed master with an air of the most imperturbable coolness. He was a little thickset man, with harsh features, marked with the small-pox, small grey eyes, and an expression of the most intense conceit and entire self-sufficiency, qualified with a certain aspect of good-nature and good-heartedness. As his master spoke he ceased working, and stood leaning on the handle of his spade, with an air of injured innocence, comical self-complacency, and provoking *sang froid*, which operated on the Major's wrath like oil upon flames. Agnes stood by with a face of deep concern. Caroline too was annoyed, though at the same time she was with difficulty able to refrain from a laugh.

"How did you happen to disobey my positive orders?" inquired the Major, waiting at last for an answer.

"Ye ken, sir," said Wattie, in the tone of soothing forbearance, with which he might have addressed a lunatic, or a froward child, "I telled ye, there was sic a swirl round yon corner, that nae rose, let alane ane o' this kind, whilk is, an ane may say, wakely, or silly like——"

"Silly!—the d—l!" cried the Major.

"As I was saying," continued Wattie, nowise abashed by this interruption, "nae rose, could lang hae studen sic a swirl."

"If there had been fifty swirls, it was nothing to the purpose. I ordered you to let it alone, and that ought to have been quite sufficient. Besides, you cannot suppose with your wisdom, that anything will flourish under the shade of that great bush?"

"I was seven year under-gairdener to the Yearl o' Wetherstone," said Wattie, with an air of offended dignity; but with the complacent smile, which always adorned his countenance whenever he referred to having held this high post, "and neither my lord nor my leddy, nor yet Davey Claisey, wha was the upper-

gairdener, e'er found faut wi' where I pat the rose busses. I was aye, though I say it mysel', coonted skeely i' that particular. An' as for the other floors, that *Lilium candidum*, and thae *Antirrhinums*——"

"*Lilium* — nonsense ! Antihumbug ! what does the man mean ? "

"He means snapdragon and white lily, papa," said Caroline, her eyes full of mirth and mischief.

"They're ca'd sae, I believe, by them that kens nae better ; but Miss Carline is mair learned, though I say it mysel' wha hae instructit her. And a clever scholar she is ! Few can bate Miss Carline. But as I was saying, thae floors, no to speak o' that *Dianthus*—pink, as some folk wad ca' it—will grow fu' weel. The Yearl o' Wetherstone——"

"The Earl of Wetherstone ! What do I care for the Earl of Wetherstone. If the earl chooses to be disobeyed by his servants, I choose to be obeyed by mine. I shall, therefore, look out for another servant, and you may look out for another place, if you think you can get one where

your master will accommodate himself to all your freaks and whims."

"Freaks and whims! Preserve us a'! I have serral ye weel, though I say it mysel', for this aughteen year and mair. Nae doot," he continued, with admirable humility, "ye might aiblins hae got ane to ser ye as weel, but I didna think it wad hae come to this."

"Come to this, indeed!" began the Major; but he was interrupted by his daughter Caroline.

"Come, come, papa," she cried, "you and Wattie can settle all about it to-morrow morning. If we do not make haste to the field, the dew will have began to fall, and then Agnes will be afraid of catching cold, and those gold and crimson clouds will have faded away before we have seen them reflected in the water." And Caroline was beginning to move in the direction of the field, when her progress was suddenly arrested by the appearance of visitors emerging from the shrubbery, through which the path led round the house into the garden.

"My uncle, and aunt, and Jane!" she exclaimed, in a tone of vexation; "no walk for us to-night, Agnes! The fates are maliciously inclined, I see."

"Hush, dearest Carry," whispered her gentle sister imploringly, as they advanced to greet the intruders; "they will hear you."

Meanwhile Wattie, left alone, according to a custom prevalent among angry people, began to soliloquize. "Heard ever anybody the like o' him the night! To meddle wi' a bred gairdner like me, that has been seven year under Davey Claisey, him that kens nae mair aboot gairdning than my fit;—but he is clean wud, daft a' thegither! I am no gaun to flit though, for a' that. Miss Irvine's aye sae canny and sae fair spoken, and Miss Carline that I carried in my arms, and hae done sae muckle to yedicate. Na, na, I am no gaun to flit for a' the Major's fikes. I wad be ower muckle missed, I ken that; and ane just has to pit up wi' the freaks and wheems o' ignorant folk." And his heart swelling with

conscious magnanimity, Wattie regarded the rose-tree, with the intention of re-transplanting it the following morning. His pride forbade the idea of his doing so that night.

CHAPTER II.

WE must now cast a retrospective glance over the history of Major Irvine and his family that we may rightly comprehend how its members were respectively situated, endeavouring to gain from a view of the circumstances in which they had severally been placed, acting on their natural dispositions, a key to their characters, as these now exhibited themselves.

Major Irvine's first marriage had been contracted while he was yet a young man. His wife was the daughter of a highland laird of good family, but limited means, and had been sent to India under the care of a brother in the East India Company's civil service, in order that she might be *pro-*

sided for,—in other words, find a husband, —while the estate was preserved intact, as the inheritance of the eldest son. Now, though I am far from thinking a matrimonial expedition to the east either a very delicate or a very dignified proceeding, still, I cannot see that it is very much worse than an expedition to Harrowgate or Cheltenham, or even the nearest assembly-room, with the same end in view. Moreover, once fairly in that land of abundant suitors, Agnes Gordon was by no means in a hurry to get a husband, nor did she practise any mean arts to obtain one. Although she had come to India with matrimony in view, she was not without a notion of esteeming and loving the person she should marry, and, in fact, had rejected two or three wealthier suitors to bestow her hand on young Irvine, then only a subaltern in a marching regiment, but handsome, gallant, adorned with all the graces of youth, and distinguished for his honourable and spirited conduct; in short, the very hero calculated to captivate the heart of the good-tempered, suscep-

tible, but rather common-place Agnes. Several children were the fruit of this union, but inheriting from their mother a delicate constitution, the evils of which were augmented by a residence in a hot climate, only two of them survived infancy. Meanwhile, Mrs. Irvine's brother, the judge, fell a victim to cholera, and he had only been dead two years when she received tidings that her elder, now only brother, had been killed by a fall from his horse. This mournful intelligence was accompanied by a letter from the bereaved old laird, beseeching the Major to allow his sole remaining child to return home, that he might see her once more ere he died, which, he added pathetically, "would not be very long now." He longed also to see the children, particularly John, now the heir of Locharroch. Major Irvine had a very affectionate disposition, and was peculiarly alive to the charms of domestic society; he was, therefore, very reluctant to part with his wife and children, but when he thought of the desolate old man, and looked at the pallid countenances and languid frames of his

Agnes and her little ones, his kind heart was melted, his conjugal and paternal anxieties alarmed, and he consented willingly to their immediate departure. As this true-hearted man watched the vessel, freighted with the precious treasures of his heart, recede fast from the surf-beaten shore of Madras, as he strained his aching sight to catch a last glimpse of the white sail, like a little sea-bird's wing on the far horizon, he was not without a foreboding that they should never *all* meet again.

Mrs. Irvine arrived at Locharroch in time to comfort the declining days of the poor old man, while the merry prattle of his little grandchildren lent one ray of cheerfulness to the sad evening twilight of his life. He died gently. He had only been dead two years, when Major Irvine found himself able at last to return to Great Britain; but ere his foot again pressed his native soil, poor Agnes, worn out by climate, fatigue, and sorrow, slept with her forefathers, in the little wild mountain churchyard of Locharroch.

Her distressed husband remained a year

in the Highlands, but finding Locharroch in too lonely a neighbourhood, and the place altogether too full of melancholy associations, he let it to an English sportsman, and sending his son to school, purchased a small residence in the south of Scotland, and removed thither with his daughter, now a gentle little girl about ten years of age. He had lived at Wallacefield for six or seven years, spending his time pleasantly enough in fishing, reading newspapers, and mixing with the society of the district, when he married a second time, a lady young enough to have been his daughter. The world, of course, called it a foolish marriage, particularly on his side; but as, during the brief period the union lasted, it added considerably to his happiness, one may reasonably conclude, that the world, for once, was wrong.

Caroline Purves was the sister of a writer (as an attorney is called in Scotland) in fair practice in the neighbouring town of Wetherstone. Her father had followed the same profession with an average share of success; but living quite

up to his income, at his death, which happened when his daughter was sixteen, she was left entirely unprovided for and dependant on the charity of her brother, who had only the business to support himself and a wife very fond of show, and with a decided taste for expense. But Caroline was a high-spirited girl, and could not brook dependence; and, young though she was, determined at once to seek a situation as governess. But this, in her case, was by no means easy to be obtained; as, though both a clever and a sensible girl, and for her years not deficient in general information, she had had no education but such as Wetherstone could afford, and was therefore totally without accurate intellectual training as well as showy accomplishments,—the latter deficiency, however, proving a greater barrier to her success than the former; a circumstance which need not surprise us, as all more or less can appreciate the *éclat* attending the exhibition of ostentatious acquirements, while few, very few indeed, can estimate the charms or the advantages of mental cultivation. Generally

speaking, the aim of female education is rather to enable to make a figure in the world than to bestow upon the individual a source of rational happiness, or the means to become a useful member of society. And this in the face of all the cant that the feminine virtues are all retiring; a species of cant which, by-the-bye, is generally rifest among those who have a taste for ostentation and parade of one kind or another. Reasoning from the cant and the parade together, one might easily be led to imagine that all the dressing, dancing, and display of accomplishments so fashionable in that great exhibition-room, modern society, were retiring virtues; while the enrichment of the mind and the enlargement of the sphere of the affections had some tendency to drag woman from that privacy which is said to be her fitting sphere.

Being, therefore, quite ineligible for *good* situations, poor Caroline was obliged to accept inferior ones; and for several years she officiated either as nursery governess in the families of the gentry, or as governess to the daughters of tradespeople.

It would have been difficult to say which of the two classes of situation was the more disagreeable to her. The half menial capacity in which she was placed in the one, wounded her pride and exposed her to the familiarity of an inferior class; while the ignorant dictation and vulgar patronage to which she was frequently subjected in the other were peculiarly galling to a mind really elegant and refined much beyond the average. We are not to suppose, however, that she gave way, either to useless repining or morbid sentimentalism; on the contrary, she strove to conceal from herself that she was unhappy, and bravely and energetically set her face to her destiny. Still, at twenty-five, the light-heartedness of youth had completely forsaken Caroline Purves; and round her naturally warm affections had grown a hard rind of reserve and distrust, difficult, though not impossible, to break through. With all her courage and industry, there were times—alone, and at night, when her spirits and her strength were exhausted by the fatigues of the day—that life appeared

to her in the light only of a dreary struggle, and she would weep and ask, "Is it always to be so?" and breathe a heartfelt wish that it might be short. Then, as she called to mind the lot of the houseless wanderer, as she remembered the poverty and ignorance, the disease of mind and body, the guilt and the suffering, the anguish and the remorse which are to be found everywhere on earth; as she thought of Him, the All-perfect, who had borne the whole sum of human woe, her repinings were silenced; and she blessed God who had given her food, and raiment, and shelter, health and innocence, a sound mind in a sound body, and a heart to love and praise Him. But, who can think always aright?

Among those who invariably treated Caroline with kindness and consideration was Major Irvine. Now, the few people of rank or property excepted, the Major was the principal person in the neighbourhood; he and poor Caroline formed, as it were, the extremes of the polite society of Wetherstone. Though not a

man of talent, or of much enlargement of mind, he possessed an average share of common sense, and, as Caroline was not slow to discover, was, in the best sense of the word, *a gentleman*. His manners, also, were very superior to any Wetherstone training could produce. The Major, therefore, was not altogether wrong when he imagined that Miss Purves seemed to prefer his company to that of any other person in Wetherstone. He was, of course, much flattered by the perception of this preference in a young and pleasant-looking lady, and quickly began to discover in her innumerable charms, of which he had not at first been aware; and though far from guessing the extent of the grievances to which she was subjected, he pitied her also for the discomforts inseparable from a dependent situation.

Caroline was, however, quite innocent of any design upon the heart of Major Irvine, nor was she ever once visited by the suspicion that she had made a conquest, till one morning, when she was surprised by a letter from him, containing an offer of his heart and hand. Her first impulse

was to decline his proposal. He was so much older than she was—old enough, indeed, to be her father; and though she liked him, she did not love him. Caroline, however, rarely acted upon impulse now. The sweet romance of youth had, unfortunately, with her long since given way before the stern realities of life. It is true, she was still conscious within herself of the power to love with all the truth and the devotion of a generous heart and an energetic mind; but she had never even seen any one capable of inspiring such an attachment. She did not, indeed, doubt that such a person might exist, but it would have been folly to suppose that he existed for her. It is only in the region of romantic fiction that friendless maidens, without wealth or worldly consequence, are certain to meet with rich and handsome lovers, adorned with every charm of mind and person calculated to attract and preserve the love of woman. Caroline saw, in becoming the wife of Major Irvine, a release from her present course of thankless toil, and a prospect of peace and com-

petence for the remainder of her life. She did not doubt that in such a situation she might have many trials and difficulties to encounter, but she should have a protector and a home; she should be no longer alone in the world. She knew Major Irvine to be an upright, honourable, and kind-hearted man, and she did not doubt that she could make him happy. Earnestly determining, then, to do her duty in that state of life upon which she had now made up her mind to enter, she returned a favourable answer to his letter, and the marriage took place shortly afterwards.

Caroline had married with the determination to find contentment; but she found more—she found happiness. Major Irvine was very fond and very proud of his young wife. Together with genuine goodness of heart, and much liberality of disposition, he possessed certain peculiarities of temper and habits. Caroline quickly made herself acquainted with these, and found it no very difficult matter to regulate her conduct so as to avoid interfering with them. In return for the

marks of affection and kindness she was receiving almost every hour of every day from her husband, she endeavoured to gratify his tastes and make his home happy. With her own hands she seasoned his curry, and prepared his mulligatawny; and it gave her pleasure to hear him declare that never, even in India, had he ever tasted either so good. She would sit at work with admirable patience for an hour or two, while he read aloud the newspapers; and would say with a smiling face, when he came to the conclusion, "Thank you, my dear."

On the sweet summer evenings as they walked together in the garden or in the field, Mrs. Irvine could admire the red light fading away in the west, or watch the shadows stealing apace over the landscape, while she listened for the twentieth time to a detail of the precise manner in which the Madras and Bombay armies had commenced the assault on Seringapatam, or to a narrative of a very memorable occasion during the southern Mahratta war, when the Major, then Captain Irvine, had himself been the first to mount a

perilous breach at the siege of an important fort, on which occasion he had received a sabre-cut in the face, and been complimented on the gallantry of his conduct by the commanding officer. To do all this, was for Caroline a labour of love—yes, love—that love which is the offspring of esteem and gratitude. With Agnes, she was not at first quite so successful as with her father. At the time of her step-mother's marriage, Agnes Irvine was a tall, thin, awkwardish, very shy, very quiet girl of fifteen or sixteen, with an amiable disposition, and very few ideas. At first, Mrs. Irvine feared she should be able to make nothing of her, for Agnes stood in such awe of her clever step-mother, as entirely to repulse all efforts at confidence and familiarity on the part of the latter, in whose presence the poor girl never uttered a word but yes, or no, and these in a tone almost inaudible. But, by degrees, Agnes discovered that if Mrs. Irvine was very clever, she was also very amiable; and in time, the uncomfortable dread with which she had at first regarded her gave way to an almost passionate love and

admiration. Agnes's temperament was generally placid, and her feelings not easily excited, but she was capable of attachment both strong and lasting. It gave Caroline the liveliest pleasure to perceive the progress she had made in her step-daughter's regard, although she was very far from guessing the depth or the fervour of the affection she had inspired; nor was she destined ever to know it till it was too late to repay it with reciprocal warmth, or to do justice to the nature capable of feeling it. Meanwhile, the two ladies, though apparently not very congenial, got on very happily together. A source of deep, mutual interest was, however, opened for them at last, when Caroline, after having been two years a wife, found herself about to become a mother. Agnes was much enchanted at the prospect of there being a baby to nurse and tend, and entered with alacrity into the preliminary preparations. What a delight it was to make the beautiful little frocks and caps! and then, as the tiny garments were finished, how very charming were the private washings and ironings in Caroline's dressing-room! for

the pretty little things were much too precious to be trusted to the rough hands of a common laundress.

It was cold winter weather, and the days were dark and brief; but the heart's bright sunshine shed a radiance over the life of the inmates of Wallacefield, and decked their future landscape in the brightest colours. It must not be imagined, however, that Caroline's anticipations were all of unclouded felicity. There were times when anxious thoughts brooded over her mind, and filled it with doubt and apprehension. Generally speaking, however, the tone of her anticipations was cheerful, for her temper was naturally buoyant; she had the happy habit of looking to the bright side of the picture; and, above all, she had an earnest faith in the Divine Providence, which orders all things for good.

The time so anxiously expected, arrived at last. Mrs. Irvine gave birth to a daughter. For a whole day of almost perfect felicity she lay feasting on the blessedness of her own thoughts. Her heart swelled with the new and rapturous

sensation of a mother's love, with grateful attachment to her husband, with tender regard to the kind Agnes, with charity to all the world, and unbounded gratitude and adoration towards the Bounteous Father who had bestowed on her blessings so abundant, joys so unspeakable. But alas !

On the day succeeding that which had been productive of so much joy, Caroline was taken violently ill, and in a few hours it became apparent that her recovery was hopeless. Youth, health, love, were hers, and she must quit them all ! As the certainty of this broke upon her, her first feeling was of unutterable anguish. Then as she beheld her husband, to whom the fatal truth had just been communicated, throw himself down by her bedside in speechless despair, she felt that she must comfort *him*, and she breathed a prayer for resignation and strength for all. She prayed fervently, though silently, that God would give her to feel that she had a more blessed home, where a yet tenderer love awaited her. She besought Him to forgive the first rebellious impulse of her natural

heart, and to give her to say, "Not my will, but Thine."

"My dear husband," she then said, "you must not thus give way to your feelings, but assist me to submit to the will of God."

Major Irvine made no reply, but wept aloud in agony of soul, while he pressed her hand to his heart and lips, and bathed it with his tears. Caroline regarded him in silent sorrow. At last he murmured, incoherently,—

"So young, so very young, Caroline; I thought I should have died in your arms, my Caroline. Oh, my own love! you must not, you shall not die—your poor little one."

At the mention of her infant, the poor mother burst into tears, but quickly recovering herself, she turned eagerly to the other side of the bed, where the pale, terror-stricken Agnes stood weeping silently. Caroline, exhausted by the effort she had made, feebly attempted to stretch out her hand to her. Agnes took it, and pressed it tenderly.

"Agnes," said the dying woman, in a

voice of extreme weakness, and tremulous with emotion, "My good kind Agnes, I have always tried to make you happy, and you have been a kind daughter and friend to me. My poor baby; will you be a mother to it when I—promise me, dearest Agnes."

"Mother! Caroline," cried the poor girl, "you have been the kindest friend I ever had, and I have loved you, oh! far, far more than I could ever either tell or show. I can never be the mother you would have been to your baby, for I am not like you; but I will live for it, devote my whole heart to it—if it were my own, I could not do more for it than I will do for your sake, beloved, dearest, dearest Caroline;" and Agnes sobbed with passionate emotion.

Caroline regarded her with astonishment and gratitude, saying slowly, "My poor child, I have never loved you half enough; but my child may live to repay you, and now, on my death-bed, I bless and thank you. Bring my baby that I may see it—ere my sight fails," and she sighed gently.

Agnes obeyed. Caroline fixed one long and earnest gaze of intense love on the unconscious little being for whom she had

given her life. Her lips then seemed to move, and the spectators guessed that she was praying to the Almighty Father to protect the motherless in all the unknown perils of the dark, uncertain future. At last the poor infant uttered a feeble wailing cry. The mother's eyes filled with tears.

"God forgive me!" she murmured; "Agnes, hold it close to me once more ere I die. Agnes obeyed, and with infinite difficulty, Caroline feebly pressed it in her arms, and printed on its little face a last, long, passionate kiss, saying in a low tremulous voice, "The last time—the last on this side the grave. But take it away now, my dearest Agnes." She then made a sign to her husband to come nearer to her. "Take my hand in yours," she said, in a voice so faint, that the perfect silence which reigned in the apartment alone permitted it to be audible: "while I am able, I wish to tell you how happy you have made me. The happiest portion of my life has been spent as your wife. From my soul I love you, and am grateful for all your love. God and the Redeemer comfort you, as they comfort me now! I leave you ano-

ther Caroline : you will speak to her sometimes of me, and we shall all meet again. Oh ! be comforted my dear, dearest husband, and pray for me now, and for us all."

She seemed unable to say more, and her eyes partly closed, while her husband seemed to writhe in anguish, and could only repeat in a voice of woe, " My Caroline ! my young wife ! " But she did not die immediately ; indeed she spoke again once or twice, but rather as if she were thinking aloud than as if she were addressing any one.

" It is not all so cold and dark now," she said ; " I do not see the grave now. Death is past. I see light, and life, and love for ever and ever."

Once or twice, too, she opened her eyes, and turned them on her husband and Agnes, the former of whom yet held her hand as he leant over the bed, while the latter knelt beside him, her eyes alternately fixed on her stepmother, or turned upwards in supplication. At last the dying woman, looking full upon them, seemed to make an effort to collect all her remaining energy into a smile full of ineffable love and

sweetness, and with its impress yet on her countenance, without a struggle she passed away.

Major Irvine was at first quite prostrated by the unforeseen calamity which had befallen him. He felt in their fullest and bitterest extent the heart-chilling vacuum, the dreary silence and stillness of these "first dark days of nothingness." He refused to be comforted, and it was many months ere the engaging ways of the little Caroline could win from him a smile. For some time the very sight of the child, although nothing could exceed his fondness for it, seemed to bring with it associations of pain, almost more than he could bear. But in time it became his greatest consolation, while in its infantine prattle, and childish contrivances, he discovered proofs of almost miraculous intelligence. And then as girlhood began to ripen into womanhood, he delighted to trace in the expanding form, and opening mind of the young Caroline, a resemblance to the wife whom he mourned. And, indeed, the likeness the young girl bore to her dead mother both in mind and person, was striking : she

had the same light, active, and graceful figure; the same pleasing features, and cheerful intelligent expression, the same beautiful, luxuriant hair. Her eyes alone were different; for you had only to look at the Major to discover that their brown lustre was derived from him. Those of the elder Caroline had been blue. In mind, the resemblance was equally remarkable, making due allowance for the wide difference between the circumstances in which the mother and daughter had been placed. The same sweetness of disposition and buoyancy of temper, the same warm affections, the same intellectual tastes, and the same energy of character which had been so conspicuous in the former, seemed to have descended to her offspring. I say, seemed, because it was yet hardly possible either to describe or ascertain the character of Caroline Irvine, which was still but a promise rather than a development. No strong emotion had yet deepened the current of her feelings, no difficulty had tested the strength of her judgment, no great temptation proved the power of her principles, no heavy trial taught her the expe-

rience which sorrow only can teach, and to those alone who through all the events of life listen for the voice of a heavenly Teacher. The blossom was fair, but who could venture to foretell, when the storms had beat, and the frost had nipped, and the lightnings scathed, what the fruit might be? Perhaps the most remarkable trait in her disposition, and one of the most promising, was a certain openness and artlessness of disposition. She had a certain clearness of perception, a certain straightforwardness of expression to which all her other characteristics seemed subordinate, and this not so much from any act of will on her part as from an almost child-like spontaneousness of character. And indeed, as yet, she was hardly more than a child. All the ardour, freshness, and simplicity of childhood she certainly possessed. Every thing had an interest for her ; books, sport, society, sunny summer skies, and cold wintry landscapes.

Her life had hitherto been like a sunny morning in spring. Agnes had amply redeemed the promise she had given to her dying step-mother. She had lived but for

her young sister, and in doing so had only followed the bent of her own strongest inclinations. She was wrapt up in Caroline, and to show kindness to the latter was the surest passport to her favour. The little girl had not been slow to discover that she was the most important person in the house, and that she could make her papa at least do as she pleased,—discoveries by which she was hardly quite so much spoiled as might have been expected. She had early displayed an aptitude for acquiring knowledge—increased, doubtless, by the praise it had received, and the admiration it had elicited from her father down to Peggy, who would hold up her hands in amazement, and exclaim,—

“Eh, sirs! hear till the bairn. She speaks like a prent buik.”

In childhood, fairy tales had been her delight. The pleasure of reading them was only inferior to that of listening while Peggy chanted some old-world ballad. It was a pretty sight of a winter evening to see Peggy's kitchen, newly scrubbed and freshly sanded, all hung round with tin dish-covers and brass candlesticks,

shining like silver and gold ; while the presiding genius of the scene sat with her clean white apron, and clear-starched "mutch," knitting by her "bleezing ingle," and repeating in monotonous chant some tale of the times of old to the little, bright-eyed child on the "crackie" at her feet ; the latter regarding her ever with a rapt, wondering, serious, yet happy face.

But I cannot stop to trace Caroline's mental progress step by step,—how from fairy tales and old ballads she passed on to that volume of wonder and enchantment, the "Arabian Nights;" and then from

"The golden prime of the good Haroun Al Raschid,"

to Scott's poems and novels, Rollin's "Ancient History," shoals of voyages and travels, Campbell, Moore's "Lalla Rookh," and some of Byron, down to the present period, when she had entered upon a course of historical study prescribed by herself under the guidance of the parish minister, of whom she was a great fa-

vourite, varied now and then by Milton and Shakspeare, and occasionally—that is, whenever one came in her way—by a modern novel. In short, Caroline was always busy about something, always happy, and generally mirthful.

Praised, flattered, and noticed on all sides, it is not to be wondered at that she had conceived no very humble opinion of her own talents and consequence. Her aunt, Mrs. Purves, was the only person whose voice was never heard to mingle in the general commendation; but her depreciating silence was too evidently the effect of jealousy on account of her daughter Jane, a girl two or three years older than Caroline, to have any influence, but the reverse, in counteracting the impression made by the praises of others. Had Caroline not possessed a large share of native good sense, and an affectionate disposition, which made her alive in all this to the *kindness* of her family and friends, as well as to her own merit, she would have been completely spoiled. Although at times self-willed enough, she

was generally as anxious to please her father and Agnes as they were to indulge her. Sometimes, to gratify the latter, she would spend an hour or two in hemming strips of muslin, or doing some other piece of work, equally tiresome and praiseworthy; and once she had delighted both her father and sister by cutting out and making, without any assistance whatever, half-a-dozen shirts for the former, which the latter pronounced to be faultless in the style of their execution. She had a sweet, clear voice, sung very pleasantly, and was upon the whole a very fair musician. If, however, she showed a peculiar aptitude for any branch of art, it was for drawing, and though she had had but little instruction, her water-colour landscapes were full of talent and promise in the conception; and considering her youth and want of cultivation, not deficient in skill in the execution. She longed for more knowledge, both of art and nature. She longed to travel, and she looked forward with all the ardour and freshness of her

youthful, unworn feelings, and unjaded mind to her visit to Locharroch, and the accompanying delights of

“The blue highland mountains and echoing streams,
With birchen glades breathing their balm.”

CHAPTER III.

MR. and Mrs. Purves and their daughter had walked as far as Wallacefield this fine summer evening, "just to take a friendly cup of tea." Jane was longing to have a chat with Caroline, "to tell her her Manchester news." Jane had just returned from paying a visit to a married niece of her mother's in that city, and had not been at home when Caroline called upon her after her return.

Mr. Purves, Caroline's uncle, would have been a good-looking little man had it not been for an intense commonness of aspect, a brisk, fidgetty, consequential manner, and a habit of putting himself into awkward attitudes, which he mistook

for fashionable ease. He was short and slight in figure, had regular features, blue eyes, and brown hair, which was cut shortish, and stood straight on end. He was a sharp-witted man of business, with no mean opinion of his own talents, as well as of his personal and social qualifications. Mrs. Purves was a tall, overgrown, over-dressed, coarse-looking woman, with a swarthy complexion, bold, meaningless black eyes, and a profusion of false, black curls, glittering with oil and bears' grease. In her youth many persons (they could not have been people of much refinement) had considered her a beauty; and from her dress and manner, it was evident that she thought herself still a very fine woman. She was very fond of show and company, much addicted to finery in dress, and though totally illiterate, and with a small jealous mind, could not be called stupid, but was, on the contrary, rather quick and smart within the narrow compass of her own vulgar perceptions.

Her daughter, Miss Jane, was a tall, stout, assured-looking girl, with a hand-

some showy figure, but inelegant, unlady-like movements, a dark complexion, regular, not ill-shaped, but large and rather coarse features, staring black eyes like her mother's, and quantities of long corkscrew black ringlets, which hung down about a quarter of a yard below her bonnet. Her manners corresponded with her appearance, and were at once pert, affected, and vulgar. Her dress—for dress, though a trivial thing in itself, assumes importance from affording an indication (as it generally does) of the character of the wearer—was of the very latest Manchester fashion. Her gown, of silk, showy, but not expensive, flounced and furbelowed in the most extraordinary manner, very fine with cotton lace and ends of ribbon, was altogether a perfect caricature of the prevailing mode. Possessed of the charms I have described, and much admired, danced, and flirted with in certain circles, Miss Jane Purves considered herself, and was considered by her parents, a belle of first water, and as superior to her cousin Caroline as a real brilliant is to a—dewdrop, let us say. It

was a complete riddle to all three how people—and there were several such—could be found so tasteless as to prefer the latter. But Mrs. Purves at last solved the difficulty :

“ If the Major had not been the Major, and all that, nobody would have thought Carry pretty ; and you may *depend* upon it, Jane, at a ball where you were not known, you would have *far* the most partners. So they need not be so set up about her as they are ; and as to her being clever, I see nothing very clever about her, for my part.”

Mrs. Purvis belonged to a class of persons who are always desperately afraid of making everybody (their own children or favourites excepted) conceited ; and for this reason seldom praise anybody or anything.

It would be a curious and not uninteresting question in psychology to ask how much conceit, or at least wounded self-importance, is in general at the bottom of the wish so generally felt to put down conceit. Conceit certainly is a sin against both good sense and good feeling ;

but there are many greater sins which do not meet with one-half the indignation. Whence comes this?

Let us ask our own hearts; for if they have any humility, assuredly they can answer.

Perhaps the chief difference between him who is called a conceited man, and an ordinary mortal, consists in the last being less open and more worldly-wise than the first. There are, however, a few great humble minds on earth, and these are always tolerant of conceit, even while they despise the littleness which produces it. They, too, know that it is quite possible to be conscious of advantages, both personal and mental, without being elated by them. But Mrs. Purves was far indeed from possessing such knowledge.

As soon as the usual greetings had been exchanged between the discomfited Irvines and their invading relatives, Mr. Purves remarked patronisingly, and with the air of a judge,

“You are looking very pretty here to-night, Major. A nice snug place this of yours.”

Now Mrs. Purves thought the Irvines were conceited of their place. She, therefore, looked round disparagingly, and observed, in a doubtful tone—

“Y-e-s. It looks very well on a fine night, and this is most delightful weather, though I must confess I am *roasting* with having walked so far. In my humble opinion,” she continued—for like many people whose opinions are anything but humble, Mrs. Purves frequently adopted this style of phraseology—“a house in the town is *more* preferable to one in the country. A long walk on dusty roads is most *unpleasant*; and Jane tells me it is *quite* the fashion now for the most *genteel* people to live in the town. Mr. and Mrs. Green, my niece and her husband, Jane Patterson that was, live quite in the town at Manchester. And the Greens are *most genteel* people—a *most excellent* match for Jane, and a capital connection for us all. They keep a carriage, and a pair of most beautiful horses, and a livery servant, and they have their *champagne* and claret almost *every* day, so you may imagine the style. My word,

Jane *has* made a marriage. She is as happy as the day is long, and no wonder, for there never *was* such a husband as Mr. Green. Only the day before Jane came away, he presented her with a *most elegant* dress, green satin with gold spots, though she had *plenty* before. There never was the like of her happiness—*never!*”

As Mrs. Purves was in the habit of laying a strong emphasis on some of her words, I have, for the purpose of conveying to the reader the more correct notion of her style of speaking, employed italics to mark those she thus accented.

“I am very glad your niece has been so fortunate,” rejoined the polite and gentle Agnes, as soon as her visitor had finished her harangue. “And you have enjoyed your visit very much, it seems, Jane?”

“Oh, beyond everything! There were so many balls and parties, and such multitudes of delightful young men. The country seems intensely dull after the town.”

“I should have thought,” said Agnes,

“that you would have been glad to return home after so long an absence?”

“Return home! Lord! how could you think so? Hett and Simmons, and indeed heaps more of the young men, were quite wild at the thoughts of my coming away. But Jane Green has invited me to pay her another visit, which I shall certainly do. Caroline, my dear child, you and I must have a walk in the garden, for I have millions of things to tell you.”

“I think you had better let us all have the benefit of your news, Miss Jane,” said the Major.

“That would be a good joke, indeed! We girls know better than that, don’t we, Carry? Nobody but ourselves can understand the fun of these things.”

“Of what things?” inquired Caroline, stealing a mischievous glance at her papa, whose countenance wore an unmistakeable expression of disgust, while Agnes looked uneasy and alarmed.

“Oh! I forgot you hadn’t come out yet. But never mind, my dear; I shall enlighten your weak mind. Few people

at my time of life have seen so much of the *beau monde* as I have."

"Perhaps I don't wish to be enlightened," said Caroline, laughing; "I am perhaps of opinion that in such a case it would be folly to be wise."

"Oh! let you alone for that," said Jane, with patronizing incredulity.

"I am decidedly of opinion," said Mr. Purves, in a pert, dogmatical tone, "that it is a great—a very great advantage to a young lady to be early introduced into the best society. I have always said so; and now, when I see my daughter Jane, I am convinced of the truth of my maxim. It gives them a—a polish and a"—

"Manner," added his wife; "*no doubt* of it."

"If I were you, Major," continued the former, "I would send Caroline for a quarter or two to her English boarding-school, as unfortunately she has no friends in the south to visit; it would do her a vast deal of good."

Here Major Irvine could contain himself no longer, but broke out indignantly, "Send my Caroline to a boarding-school,

to be spoiled by their cursed airs and nonsense!—(not but what she has too much sense to be spoiled by anything.) Let me tell you, Mr. Purves, I would not have my Caroline—my sweet wild rose—one iota different from what she is, for all the airs and graces in the world. Manners indeed! Trash and trumpery!”

Mr. Purves made no reply, but took immense bites of bread and butter, (for they were now at tea,) with an air of amused forbearance.

“Hem!” said his wife, with a glance of affected pity at Caroline, and a look of maternal pride at her daughter, whose long ringlets touched the table as she bent over her tea-cup, for the purpose of pretending to conceal her laughter. Caroline did not attempt to conceal *her* amusement; for though she did not laugh outright, her eyes sparkled, and her whole countenance beamed with mirth. Agnes, seriously annoyed, by way of starting another subject, proposed that as soon as they had finished tea, they should all go into the garden to pick a few early strawberries.

"Thank you, Agnes," said Mrs. Purves, "but I am afraid the grass will be getting damp, and I am quite *knocked up* besides. It is the most tiresome hot road, that; never was *anything* like it."

"I am extremely sorry," said Caroline, with ironical politeness, "that you should have put yourself to so much inconvenience and fatigue to come to see us."

Agnes looked reproachfully at her younger sister, while Mrs. Purves replied, "Oh! I don't mind it once in a way; but I am *thankful* I am not you, to have it to do *every* time you want anything in the town. My object in coming to-night, in this *awful* heat, was to ask Caroline to join a little hop we are going to have in a quiet way at our house on Wednesday night."

"I shall be very happy to come," Caroline replied, with sincerity, for she was very fond of dancing, and a dancing-party was rather a rare event in the Wetherstone neighbourhood.

"But it is to be partly a musical evening, too," said Jane, "for Mr. Ross dotes on music."

"And who is Mr. Ross?" inquired Major Irvine.

"One of the *muds* at Mr. Dawson's," replied the young lady, with characteristic elegance of diction.

"The whats?"

"The muds;—one of the young men that have come to study agriculture at the Haughhead."

"Study fiddlesticks! A pretty like studying they make of it!—scampering all over the country in the morning, and idling about the town in the evening. Studying agriculture indeed! Studying hunting and billiards is much more like the thing. An idle pack! I wish their fathers knew how they spend their time. If they were my sons, I would ship them all off to India to fight the Affghans, I would."

"Bless my stars, Major," said Mrs. Purves, "they are *most genteel* young men, and a great acquisition to the society here, and I have *no doubt* Caroline would like very well to dance with any one of them."

"Oh! it would be a very disagreeable

person indeed I did not like to dance with, for I am very fond of dancing. I must say I have sometimes found these young men very pleasant, and they are generally gentlemanly."

"No doubt of it, Caroline; and they pay a hundred and fifty pounds a year for their board."

"A perfect imposition!" began the Major; but Mrs. Purves interrupted him:

"Oh! but they can *well* afford it. Mr. Ross's father is a *first-rate* Glasgow merchant, and the son is a *most delightful* young man, and *excessively* accomplished; plays upon the *piano*, and has been abroad, where he was quite like a *brother* to some German prince, whose name I cannot remember. And Mr. Cornish's father is a *baronet* of a *very old* family in Lancashire, *very high* people; Mr. Green knows something about them. And this young man is very *intimate* at Wetherstone Park. Never was the like."

"I think it right to encourage deserving young men," said Mr. Purves, "right and proper. It is doing as one would be done by, and that is my maxim. John is going

to Glasgow too, and Mr. Ross's father may be of use to him there—you understand ? I consider it right for the father of a family to be a little prudent—right and proper ; and it is doing the kind thing at the same time."

But Jane, now becoming impatient for an opportunity to dazzle and mortify her cousin Caroline by an account of her triumphs and a description of her finery, again proposed a walk in the garden. Caroline assented, and the two girls set off by themselves.

" Well, now, my dear," began Jane, as soon as they were out of the house, " that we have got by ourselves, away from the old people, I have got myriads of things to say. But, in the first place, how do you like my gown ? The colour is quite the rage, and it was made by the most fashionable dressmaker in Manchester. The making cost a mine of money, to be sure ! Indeed, it was a tremendous favour I got it done at all. Carry Jones was quite in despair that she could not get the pattern ; but I would not give it even to

her: I hate so to have common things. Isn't it beautiful?"

"It is very showy," was Caroline's response.

"I can assure you, Caroline, Hett said it was the handsomest gown in Manchester; and he has *such* a taste! I wish you knew Hett,—he is so handsome and genteel! Not but what Simmons is as handsome; but he is not so very,—*very*. I danced seven times with Hett one evening. Everybody talked about us,—very disagreeable, of course; but one must lay one's account with things of that kind, and be above minding them. Jane Green and Carry Jones never let me alone about him. I used to tell them it was nonsense; for, after all, he was not so much more attentive to me than the rest. In fact, I was quite pestered by them all. I was like to faint with dancing so often. I used to tell them they must let me alone, or I should positively die; but they would take no denial. Men are *such* creatures! I have seen myself engaged for as many as six dances at once. And then some

of them used to sit in the same church as we did; or, at least, they came to that church,—and they used to stare so! I declare, I dare hardly sometimes lift my eyes from my book. Impertinent creatures!” And Miss Purves heaved a sigh, whether at the remembrance of the persecutions to which she had been subjected, or because her martyrdom was over for the present, I shall leave the reader to determine.

“Yes,” said Caroline, “it was excessively rude to stare you out of countenance. They must have been very underbred young men; not gentlemen, I should suppose.”

“Lord bless me, child, you don’t understand; it was a great compliment, and I can assure you they were excessively gentlemanly. I have a notion you wouldn’t dislike a visit to Manchester yourself; though, to be sure, it is not everybody they might happen to take the same fancy to as, I believe, they did take to”—Miss Purves here broke off, and a short silence ensued, which she inter-

rupted by inquiring: "By-the-bye, Caroline, what kind of bonnet have you got for your best this season?"

"I had it on when I met you the other day."

"That! is that your best?—that plain straw, with the white and green ribbons? My dear, there is nothing on earth so antediluvian this year as straw bonnets. But country people know nothing about anything."

Caroline laughed.

"If, as you say, country people know nothing about the fashion, I need not vex myself about my bonnet, as nobody will find out that it is antediluvian."

"Ah! you have got my word I see. Isn't it a capital one? Carry Jones and I called everything we didn't like antediluvian, and everything we did, ravishing. It is so convenient and saves so much trouble."

"Indeed! I should have thought that having only two words to express your ideas, must sometimes have been attended with the inconvenience of finding them rather inappropriate."

"They always expressed *our* ideas," Jane answered, somewhat sharply.

"I have no doubt of it," Caroline replied; but the satire of her tone was lost upon her cousin, who again began:

"I shall introduce you to two or three beaux on Wednesday night, Caroline. They seem all very nice young men, though I have not seen much of them yet. Really, it is rather a treat to me to be without them for a little. We shall see plenty of them soon, I dare say."

This edifying conversation,—if it be not an abuse of language to term it a conversation,—was interrupted at this interesting point by the appearance of the seniors of the party. After having taken a few turns upon the lawn, among the flower-beds, during which Agnes and Caroline gathered a large bouquet for their guests, while Mrs. Purves expatiated on the "extreme loveliness" and "*splendour*" of one or two gardens she had lately seen, without bestowing one word of commendation upon the really very pretty one in which she was now walking,

the whole family at last took leave of their entertainers.

“Caroline, my love,” said her father, almost before they were out of hearing, “your relations are becoming more and more intolerable. How your angel-mother came to be connected with such a set of vulgarians, I am more at a loss than ever to understand.”

Caroline merrily laughed assent to the Major’s speech, while Agnes whispered in a tone of alarm :

“Oh ! papa, they will hear you.”

CHAPTER IV.

SEVERAL of the guests were already assembled, when, on the evening of the party, Caroline was ushered into her aunt's drawing-room. The two young men, however, who were to be the lions of the evening, had not yet made their appearance. An unusual excitement seemed to pervade the whole family.

Mrs. Purves looked red and fussy in *cérise* satin with a blue scarf. Miss Purves in stiff white muslin, seemed as if she was afraid to move lest she should derange her dress or any of her innumerable curls or streamers of ribbon. She was engaged in scolding the children, and endeavouring to prevent them from destroying the picturesque arrangement she had made of the

furniture ; but without much effect, for as she was unable on account of her dress to take any active measures to enforce her wishes, they paid little attention to her words.

Her brother, a silly-looking youth, with a long helpless-looking nose, and no forehead at all, yet with a certain air of useless amiability, was endeavouring to make himself agreeable to a young lady by repeating everything she said with an awkward laugh.

Mr. Purves, leaning back against the chimney-piece, with his coat tails tucked under his arms, surveyed the scene before him with heartfelt satisfaction, which he in vain endeavoured to conceal under an ill-assumed air of careless ease, intended to denote that he was, in his own phraseology, "quite used to the sort of thing." The pleasurable excitement of his feelings betrayed itself, however, in an even unusual loquacity, and in a number of patronising jokes and bad puns with which he favoured the company.

Meanwhile, his wife and daughter were not so perfectly happy, as they were

not without some anxiety to qualify the bliss of the moment. At last a slight bustle was heard in the hall, for the drawing-room was on the ground floor. Mr. Purves instantly dropped his coat-tails, and looked briskly round, remarking to the lady who sat nearest to him in a rapid, important whisper,—

“Ha! our young friends. Very gentlemanly young men, I can assure you.”

Mrs. Purves was in the midst of a speech, descriptive of “my niece, Jane Green’s *most elegant*, blue, *real* satin damask drawing-room furniture;” but she stopped short to give an anxious glance round the room to see that all was right, and to assume an air of greater dignity than was altogether compatible with the continuance of the animated gesticulation which had hitherto served as a sort of commentary upon her description.

“Be quiet, can’t you, you little idiot,” cried Jane, in an angry whisper to one of her little sisters. “My gracious! how you are rumpling your nice clean frock

and your new pink sash. Draw the hearth-rug straight this instant ! ”

Then darting across the room to where a little boy was endeavouring to reach, by means of climbing on a chair, some home-made imitations of china which adorned the top of a *chiffonière*, she dragged him down with a powerful arm, exclaiming, “ There never were such children ! ” Then quickly returning to her seat, she smoothed her dress, and in the twinkling of an eye assumed that air of interesting abstraction which is communicated by a listless attitude, and eyes upturned to the ceiling, so as to hide half the irids, and display nearly all the whites. But a threatening murmur among the children caused her again to relapse into naturalness, and say, with a glance of rage, but in a hurried stifled voice, for steps were heard at the very door,—

“ Hold your tongues, you little wretches ! or—”

Mr. Cornish and Mr. Ross were now announced, and Miss Purves had barely time to be absorbed in the contemplation

of the window cornice, before they were both in the room. Mr. Purves, with *empressement*, advanced to meet them, extending his hand to each in turn.

“Happy to see you, gentlemen. I take it very kind of you to come to us in this easy way—a quiet cup of tea and a snack at night. We make no pretensions,” surveying with much humility the decorations of the apartment, which sufficiently bespoke the vulgar pretensions of the family to whom it belonged; “more for use than show—that is my maxim. Jane, my dear, don’t you see the gentlemen?”

Jane, thus called upon, half rose from her seat, made a graceful bow to each, and sank back again into an attitude of excessive affectation. The gentlemen were then introduced to various members of the party, Caroline being among the number. The introduction was effected by her uncle in the following terms,—

“My niece, Miss Caroline Irvine, my brother-in-law, Major Irvine of Wallacefield’s daughter. Perhaps, Mr. Cornish, you have met the Major at Sir John

Wood's." (Mr. Purves knew very well that he had not, but he wished his aristocratic guest to understand that he had a brother-in-law who visited at a baronet's.) "Both military men, you know; birds of a feather, eh?"

Mr. Cornish was a remarkably handsome young man; so handsome, and in appearance altogether so striking, that it would have been almost impossible to pass unnoticed his unusual personal claims to admiration. He seemed about twenty-five or twenty-six, was tall, but not too tall, with a figure at once manly and elegant, and with that air which we are accustomed to call one of birth and breeding, and which indeed is rarely to be met with except among the higher classes. In the individual now in question it was mingled in no small degree with *hauteur*, which, though a French word, describes exactly the proud repose of manner so eminently English. He was dark-complexioned, with high aristocratic features, dark hair, Roman nose, and full lips. His forehead was large, but not so large as to interfere with the symmetry of

the face, while one would have said the expression of his very dark, brilliant eyes, was rather passionate than tender. His bearing altogether gave the idea of birth, intellect, and an elevated position in society, accompanied by a consciousness of possessing these advantages, and a consequent tendency to look down upon others inferiorly endowed. One would have guessed him to be one of those persons of whom one hears it said, "They can be agreeable when they please."

One could fancy indeed that he might be fascinating, though careful observation would have led one to suppose that he was more generally, as he seemed now, silent, supercilious and unapproachable. Whether these physiognomical indications corresponded with the actual character of the gentleman in question, I could of course tell you if I pleased, but for many reasons I prefer allowing the course of the narrative to unfold gradually from his actions, his various dispositions, and the real nature of his moral and mental qualities.

Mr. Ross also was handsome, both in face and person, but the one was disfigured

by the foppery of his dress, and the other by a certain air of conceit and affectation. Vanity was as legibly written on his appearance as pride on that of Mr. Cornish. He was about the middle height, with well-shaped features, in no particular style; dark, but rather too small eyes, and a great quantity of brown hair, neatly arranged, but too stiff in curl.

As soon as the preliminary greetings were over, Mr. Ross seated himself near Miss Purves, with so manifest a determination to be overwhelmingly agreeable, and exclusively polite, that Caroline—albeit a novice in such matters—set him down at once as rather underbred. Jane however seemed enchanted, and while becoming more die-away than ever, cast a glance at her cousin, which seemed to say, “I told you how it would be. You see how I am run after.” After tea and coffee were over, Mrs. Purves proposed a little music.

“Jane, my dear, set the example to your friends. Jane, Mr. Ross, has had the best of teaching, and I must say it has not been thrown away.”

"Oh, mamma!" cried the young lady, with affected modesty.

"You are fond of music then, I suppose, Miss Purves?" said Mr. Ross.

"Oh! I am passionately fond of it," she replied, casting up her eyes; "I could not exist without it."

"Music, in my opinion," said Mr. Purves, "is a great civiliser of the age. Shakspeare says, 'Music has charms to soothe the savage breast,'" and in a sing-song, bombastic tone, very distressing to Caroline, he spouted the whole passage, concluding—"Shakspeare, in my opinion, is the first of our poets—no doubt of it, sir,—the first, the very first."

This remark was addressed to Mr. Cornish, who merely replied by a slight curl of the lip, and then turned away.

Mr. Ross now offered his arm to conduct Miss Purves to the pianoforte. After some affected diffidence, she allowed herself to be prevailed upon, and wriggling towards it, seated herself with sundry contortions, and once more gazing fervently at the ceiling, began to beat the unfortunate instrument in the most unmerciful

way. Mr. Ross listened with an air at once critical and devoted.

"Ah!" he said, when she had finished, "the very piece which the Countess Ida von Carlberg used to play so divinely—the very piece she played *that* evening at Wiesbaden. Ah!"

"Ida!" cried Jane; "what a pretty name! Were you very intimate with the Countess, Mr. Ross?"

"Intimate!" he replied, with a superior smile. "You ought to go to Germany, Miss Purves—German literature, German music, and German sentiment, are all so much the fashion now; and with reason, they are all so superior to anything our foggy, matter-of-fact island can produce. You have read Goethe of course."

"It is a very nice book," said Jane, unwilling to confess her ignorance, and imagining "Goethe" was the name of a fashionable publication.

"A wonderful genius was Goethe," said Mr. Ross.

"Astonishing!" returned Jane, beginning to suspect she had made a mistake.

Dancing was now proposed, and a plain-

looking lady of a certain age, who had been invited on purpose to be useful, sat down to play a set of quadrilles.

"You will dance, Mr. Cornish?" said Mrs. Purves, intending that he should open the ball with her daughter.

"Excuse me, Madam, I am no dancer."

"Dear me! but you will dance just this one dance with——"

"Will you dance, Miss Irvine?" said Mr. Cornish, turning carelessly to Caroline, and evidently determined not to be forced to dance with Miss Purves.

Now Caroline, as I have said before, was fond of dancing, but she had no idea of being asked in this cavalier style. She therefore answered, "No, I thank you. I dare say my aunt will find me another partner."

"Oh, certainly. John, your cousin Caroline wants a partner."

"Do you, Caroline? I am sure I shall be delighted."

And John's awkward, vacant face did for a minute actually become eloquent with the delight he expressed as he led off his cousin Caroline, whom in his heart of

hearts, though he durst not have given utterance to such an opinion, he thought ten times prettier than his sister, or anybody in the room. Caroline could not avoid smiling at the scrape she had got herself into; for John was a dreadful dancer, and as she smiled, she caught Mr. Cornish's eye. He smiled too, less scornfully and more genially than hitherto, but apparently with a sort of malicious pleasure in her discomfiture. His smile seemed to say: "You are rightly served for your sauciness, in refusing when I condescended to ask you."

Meanwhile Mr. Ross had engaged Jane, who smiled and languished as she said with an affected simper—"Ah, Mr. Ross now! you should have asked somebody else first."

"I could not have been so cruel to myself, Miss Purves," was the gallant reply.

During one of the intervals in the dancing of the quadrille, Caroline had the advantage of overhearing her aunt's attempts to entertain Mr. Cornish.

"And what do you think of *our* part of the world, Mr. Cornish?"

"I have not been long enough in Scotland to be able to form an opinion."

"Have you been in the highlands?"

"Not yet."

"Dear me! Mr. Purves and I have been *twice* there on a tour. It is a *most delightful* place—never *was* the like of it. Don't you think you will go, sir?"

"Possibly I may take a run to ——shire in the shooting season."

"——shire! My! That is where my niece Caroline Irvine is going next month. What part of the county are you going to?"

"Near ——."

"Well, that is the most *extraordinary* thing; that is the very part Caroline is going to! Her brother, Mr. Irvine Gordon of Locharroch's estates, are there. Locharroch is a *most beautiful* place. Quite an old highland family, you know."

"A pretty little highland place," said Mr. Purves, joining them, and speaking in a tone of affected carelessness, and with the air of a person quite accustomed to judge of such things; "but you forget, my dear, Mr. Cornish is accustomed to his

father, Sir George's, fine place in Lancashire."

Here it was again Caroline's turn to dance, and she heard no more. She was a little annoyed that her relations should thus display their vulgarity of mind before Mr. Cornish; for she felt convinced that he would not only be peculiarly sensible of it, but very intolerant towards it. And in effect, on catching a glimpse of his countenance from the opposite side of the quadrille, it was marked by an expression of disgust, and a haughty sneer, which though slight, was perfectly perceptible. At that moment he looked disagreeable, and Caroline felt that she did not like him. Now Caroline, as we know, had herself a peculiar aversion to the vulgarity of her uncle's family, and when not too much annoyed by it, was also much disposed to laugh at it; but she was perfectly incapable of feeling towards any human being the sort of withering scorn and contempt expressed in Mr. Cornish's face, and she had a sort of intuitive consciousness, that a man who could feel as he

looked must be very deficient in gentleness of heart.

Mr. Cornish did not dance at all during the evening, but after he had got rid of his host and hostess, sat with an *ennuyé* air, turning over the leaves of some annuals and music-books, occasionally surveying the scene around with a supercilious glance, and when any one sang, not even deigning to look as if he listened. Caroline decided in her own mind, that though he was not vulgar, he was not well-bred. She began to perceive, for the first time, that elegance and refinement of appearance, and even an aristocratic bearing and manner, do not necessarily constitute a gentleman, in the higher sense of that expressive term. She was just trying to arrange her ideas on this subject, when supper was announced, and Mr. Cornish, rising with an aspect of relief, advanced towards her, saying, "Perhaps, Miss Irvine, you will go down to supper with me, though you would not dance with me?"

"Perhaps I may, as I suppose you must

go down to supper with some one, and therefore I may as well be inflicted upon you as anybody else."

Mr. Cornish laughed. "You are too severe, Miss Irvine; you must know that your company would be a great favour."

"I do not see how I must know it, if you do not say it."

"*Oh ! cela va sans dire.*"

"Not with me; I am very matter-of-fact."

"That you must excuse me if I doubt," said Mr. Cornish, who seemed suddenly to have become lively and agreeable. They were now at the supper-table; and during that part of the entertainment, Mr. Cornish seemed to exert himself to remove the unfavourable impression he had made in the earlier part of the evening. Dropping the jesting tone in which their conversation had commenced, he began to talk of persons and things, of men, manners, and books, of music, painting, and poetry; and on all these subjects he spoke in a manner at once intelligent and graceful. The tone, too, of his address had now become both respectful and insinuating; and though he

evidently wished to be agreeable, there was nothing in his style of the half-bred *empressement* of Mr. Ross. What seemed an absolute labour to the one, appeared quite easy and natural to the other. In fact, Caroline began to feel that Mr. Cornish was almost, if not quite, fascinating, and to doubt the correctness of her earlier impression of him. She found his conversation so interesting, that she was much annoyed when, the more substantial part of the supper being removed, her uncle rose to make a speech, thus imposing silence upon the rest of the company.

Mr. Purves's speech combined the usual vagueness, absurdity, and indifferent grammar of what one may be permitted to call amateur oratory, with more than its usual verbosity and want of fluency. It would have defied the most ingenious of human beings to conjecture the aim of his discourse, so heterogenous, seemingly, were the subjects upon which it touched. He talked of "his pride, and he might say, his heartfelt satisfaction;" of a "galaxy of beauty met—in youth—and, he trusted, to enjoy themselves, round a hospitable, that

was to say, a festal board." He spoke of "our beloved country, Caledonia he might call it, if not Old England, which he might say, which he was proud to feel, was under the sway of Her Majesty the Queen." He said something about the nobles of the land and a roof-tree, which, being intended to be the finest rhetorical flourish in the speech, was of course utterly unintelligible. He then alluded to a certain "noble lord with whom he had the honour to be connected in business—(he had made himself useful to Lord Wetherstone during a late election, when his lordship's nephew was one of the candidates)—and to his lady, a model of female beauty, dignity, and grace, and all the charms which accompany, that was to say, adorn high rank. He was sure that every one present must agree with him, that the town and—its vicinity—he might say, the whole county, could not *want* * Lady Wetherstone. He had seen her on the race-stand, surrounded by the *élite* of the land; he had seen her in the midst of her family, surrounded by

* *Anglicé*, do without.

her noble and beautiful children ; and he could assure his friends that she possessed—in short, that she was a good mother, an example to all who—who might hear him. He remembered one day when little Lady Matilda—no, it was Lady Fanny—that sweet and interesting child, that scion of a noble house, fell upon the fender, and hurt her forehead. He should never forget—no, never, to his dying hour—her ladyship’s—how sorry she was.” From Lady Wetherstone’s maternal tenderness, he got round, by some occult path, to the constitution of British society. The upper classes wère, he said, composed of “ aristocracies.” He “ congratulated himself and his guests, he felt proud to feel that his table was then graced by the presence of specimens, he might say, members or representatives of these aristocracies. His friend, Mr. Cornish, whom he was delighted to see, was the aristocracy of title, born in the halls of his ancestors ; his young friend, Mr. Ross, whom he was also delighted to welcome, represented the moneyed interest—a scion of the aristocracy of wealth. He was glad, he was

proud to see them both; and he trusted that though the first, it would not be the last time they should all meet under the roof-tree of 'the mountain and the flood.' Let young people enjoy themselves, was his maxim." He called upon his guests to "join him in a bumper, with all the honours, to the health of the strangers, who he trusted, who he begged would not be strangers—Mr. Cornish and Mr. Ross."

After the deafening and outlandish uproar consequent upon the toast was over, Mr. Ross returned thanks in a speech, the aim of which seemed to be to assure the company, that though accustomed to the luxurious feasts of the western metropolis, and the refined and *recherché* entertainments of the German nobility, he could be supremely happy anywhere that there was the sunshine of bright eyes. And with a bow to Miss Purves, who was seated next to him, he sat down, a smile of conscious superiority at his own more intimate knowledge of the usages of fashionable society, playing about his mouth. Meanwhile Caroline felt rather uncomfortably ashamed of her uncle's eloquence, and feared to en-

counter again the sarcastic glance and contemptuous sneer of her neighbour; but when at last their eyes met, no such expression was to be seen on his countenance. A slight, scarce perceptible, yet unmistakeable glance of intelligence, which plainly said that he did not confound her with her relations, was the sole indication that he had heard Mr. Purves's speech. After supper he invited her to join a quadrille; and she then discovered, that in addition to his other agreeable qualifications, he danced beautifully, better than herself even, and she too was a good dancer. It must be confessed, that as Caroline lay awake that night, or rather morning, too much heated and excited to sleep, her handsome partner occupied no small share of her thoughts. Nothing so agreeable, so intellectual, or so refined, had, in the remote corner in which her scarce eighteen years had been passed, ever crossed her path before; and her youthful imagination was captivated, and her vanity flattered by the distinction he evidently made between herself and the rest of the party.

And what were Mr. Cornish's reflections? Alas for the dignity of my heroine! he was too sleepy to reflect at all, at least on that night; and as soon as he laid his head upon the pillow, he fell into a profound slumber, during which he did *not* dream of Caroline. A day or two after, however, he amused himself with writing to a friend in London a satirical account of the Scotch country-town *réunion*, when, after having in the cleverest and most merciless manner turned everything and everybody else into ridicule, he at last mentioned the Major's daughter in the following terms:—"There was only one tolerable woman there, or rather I ought to say *child*, for though *piquante* and amusing enough, Miss Irvine has evidently not yet passed the age of bread and butter. She is, in short, a prettyish, wild, uncultivated thing, with a good deal of natural acuteness and vivacity, and might possibly, under different circumstances, become a fine woman; but is at present altogether too simple and *naïve* for anything beyond an hour's amusement. I dare say I should not have

remarked her at all, had it not been for the horrible *grossièreté* of the people by whom she was surrounded, and from which she really is perfectly free. For wild and unfashioned as she certainly is, there is about her a sort of native grace, which, though not exactly suited to a London drawing-room, can never have anything in common with the vulgarity of her relations."

CHAPTER V.

THE impression Mr. Cornish had made upon Caroline lasted about a week in undiminished vividness, and then, as she had not seen him since, began to fade away. The arrival of a letter from her sister-in-law, fixing the time of her departure for the north, helped much to throw the idea of the handsome stranger into the shade, and the bustle of preparation, and the excitement of leave-taking, caused her almost to forget him. Indeed, had he not intimated the possibility of meeting her in the highlands, it is probable that she would have ceased entirely to think of him; but the fact of his being associated in her mind with the all-absorbing subject of interest, her visit to ——shire, together

with his attractions, combined to prevent his being completely forgotten.

It was now the evening preceding the day of Caroline's departure. Agnes was still busy completing the arrangements for this important and exciting event. Caroline and her father were alone, together, in the drawing-room. It was the Major's habit to take a nap every afternoon; but to-day, in order that he might lose not an instant of his beloved child's society, he had determined to forego this indulgence. He had kept his resolution till tea-time, and for more than an hour afterwards. But, gradually as the daylight began to fade away, and the room to grow more dusky, the Major's conversation got less and less animated, till it ceased altogether. At last, his heavier breathing announced that he had not been able to withstand the allurements of the god of Dreamland. Caroline gazed round the room—the corners were in total darkness; the furniture looked large and shadowy; and a sort of oppressive stillness seemed to reign over all. She looked at her sleeping father, and as she did so, a deep sense of

all his kindness and affection filled her heart with filial gratitude and love. It seemed as if, till that moment, she had never sufficiently appreciated his boundless fondness, and her heart smote her for having so anxiously desired, so eagerly anticipated the visit that was to separate her from him who loved her presence better, she knew, than anything on earth. How selfish her delight had been, and how self-denying was her father's love in comparison to hers! And with her eyes full of tears, the young Caroline glided softly behind his easy-chair, and laying her head just where the gold-brown tresses touched his few silvery hairs, she prayed God to bless him in his slumbers. Then she slid quietly out of the room into the garden, that she might, without disturbing her father, give vent to her excited feelings, and calm her unwonted emotion beneath the sober influence of the gathering shades. She commenced to pace backwards and forwards on a gravel-walk which crossed the lawn, just where it began to slope towards the river.

It was now a warm evening in the end

of July. The sun had been set for some time, but a long track of pale pure light in the sky was yet reflected in the western sweep of the river, and cast a sort of faint melancholy glitter on the projecting parts of the rock, and on the strange, shadowy shapes of the old oak trees. Clouds gathered above the brighter line on the horizon, and seemed ready to curtain the dying daylight. Dim vapours shrouded the heavens, except in the east, where one or two stars, like large silver spangles, shone in the grey-blue sky. A deep shadow, wrapped as in one dark grey veil, the opposite woods, the river, the island, and the nearer objects in the lawn and garden. The measured murmur of the river mingled with the soft tone of the night wind, as, heard, rather than felt, it whispered mournfully sweet through the great chestnut tree, while it came laden with a heavy, luscious fragrance from hedges of sweet-peas, and beds of carnations and mignonette. The dreamy sweetness of the hour was peculiarly agreeable to Caroline's present feelings, and as she paced up and down she fell into a deep reverie.

She thought of life and destiny, and began to reflect, as she had never done before.

- . The first departure from home is an era in the life of a young girl, particularly of a girl possessed of the warm feelings and active imagination which distinguished Caroline Irvine. To her fresh ardent mind, life yet wore the gloss of novelty, and its commonest incidents and scenes were invested with the interest of untried adventures. A journey in a stage-coach called forth a thousand anticipations; the thoughts of the lakes and the mountains were like a fairy dream of beauty, while she was never weary of picturing to herself the style of the society she should meet in the highlands, so different, doubtless, from the prosaic commonplace of the people at home. Poor, simple Caroline! The *blasé* worldling, to whom a tour of the globe, or the expectation of meeting a party composed of the brightest stars in the firmament of genius, would hardly excite an emotion; or the man, too wise in his own conceit to be moved by what he is pleased to consider trifles, will look down on you with contempt. But, never

mind, Caroline, for you are in your simplicity, wiser, happier, and more worthy of respect than they are. But even already Caroline began to feel that events are not so agreeable in occurrence as in anticipation. Hitherto she had looked forward to her visit as an event of unmixed delight; but now that she was on the eve of her departure, strange to say, she thought more of the pain of leaving her father and Agnes, and her dear, beautiful Wallacefield, than of all the pleasures she had so fondly painted. She wondered why she had never thought of all this before, and whither had fled all the bright scenes her fancy had conjured up, and which she now attempted in vain to recall. She wondered what it was that could cause such a revolution in the mental economy; and she began to ponder the mysteries of her own nature. She was yet rapt in contemplation, standing on the bank under a bending ash-tree, the long branches of which overhung the stream, and even dipped into a dark, still river-pool, when she felt the pressure of a gentle embrace, and, looking up, saw Agnes.

“What are you about here, dearest

Carry, out in the dark, all alone, and without your bonnet, and the dew falling? and I heard you sneeze this morning. Really, my dear, you are very foolish. I shall be miserable about you when you are away; you are so very imprudent."

"But I promise you, I shall take the greatest care of myself."

"Come in then now, dear—do come in" (in a coaxing tone) "and see how nicely your dresses are packed; I have got such a nice corner for your green morning-gown; and I want to show you where I have put your large Bible. I have got such a nice bit of flannel to wrap it up in."

"I shall come very soon."

"If this were a fine, bright night, I could see some reason for your wishing to stay out, though even then it would be foolish, but it is really so dull, and that wind makes it seem quite chilly."

"I like the wind, it seems to me like a sort of wild, melancholy music; and though the night is not gay and bright, the clouds and the deep shadows are full of beauty, grave, but not gloomy, like my own thoughts."

“My dear child, how can you speak so? I don’t like to hear you. It seems not natural for our merry Carry to talk about being grave.”

“Wait a minute, Agnes, I will tell you what I was thinking when you came up. Do you see the river there above the cauld, how smooth and still it seems, and down below how rapidly it rushes on to the sea? It came into my head that my life, till now, had been like that placid water, so calm and pleasant, like it *seeming* to stand still, though in reality like it, too, gliding on to the great sea; and I began to think that perhaps now the rest of my life was to be like the rushing stream, tossed and broken, and full of events, and perhaps troubles; and then to wonder if we should ever all be living here again in the same way we have always done—all so quiet and happy together. I had a notion that perhaps we were on the eve of some great change.”

“God forbid;” cried Agnes, in a tone of alarm. “It is not right, Caroline, to give way to such fancies, and I see no reason to suppose that there will be any

change, unless, indeed, you were married, but you are far—far too young for that, and must not think of it for many, many years. Oh, if I were only certain that you would remember to have your clothes aired, and not go out without being properly wrapped up, and be sure to guard against getting your feet wet, I should not be anxious about anything else. But do come in now, like a dear good girl, and promise me, Caroline, that you will attend to all these things ?”

“I will, indeed, dear Agnes, for your sake, I promise you most solemnly; and you, for your comfort, must promise me to remember that I am very strong, and rarely catch cold at all. I am quite different from you.”

“Then do come in now, dearest ?”

Caroline no longer offered resistance, and as they walked towards the house, began to talk in her usual lively strain.

Caroline usually slept well; but to-night, from the unusual excitement of her feelings, she found it difficult to obtain repose, and lay awake for many hours. She endeavoured, however, to lie

perfectly still, that she might not disturb Agnes, who slept in another bed in the same apartment. She had fallen into a state between waking and sleeping, when a slight sound caused her to open her eyes, and in the faint dawn she perceived the figure of her sister bending over her, while in a low, though audible whisper, she heard her pray to God to bless her and keep her in all the trials and dangers of this life, and preserve her for His own in the life to come. Agnes then murmured softly, in accents at once fervent and tender,

“ My heart’s darling—my own child ! ”

Caroline neither spoke nor moved, but she was deeply penetrated, and after her sister had withdrawn, wept gently for a long time.

She was to start early the following morning. Now everybody knows that there is nothing so comfortless as the early breakfast preceding a morning journey. A chill blank air pervades the tea-equippage, the tea is never properly infused, the eggs have not the right taste, and the toast is invariably burnt and tough, from

the haste with which it has been made. The sight of umbrellas, parasols, shawls, and great-coats lying on another table, or perchance on the sofa of the breakfast-room, has, moreover, some way or other, a strange effect in depriving one of an appetite; while the necessity of looking at one's watch every five minutes has something in it very depressing. The whole furniture of the room even has a sort of forlorn aspect. One could almost imagine that it, too, felt the parting, and sympathised in the depression. Caroline tried, but without very great success, to sip her tea, and to eat a morsel of the beef-steak, which Agnes had had cooked, as it was "a long journey for the poor dear child to Edinburgh without any solid food." At last, unseen, she contrived to slip a slice of toast into her pocket, and to drink off her cup of tea at one draught, and then she said she was ready. At the same moment the sound of the phaeton-wheels was heard upon the gravel at the front door, and Peggy rushed into the breakfast-parlour. Major Irvine talked incessantly, his eyes wandering round the

room, but never finding a resting-place, save on his daughter Caroline.

“You will soon be back to us, Carry. Three months will soon pass away, and you will often write to us, and tell us about all you see. I am no scribe, but it will go hard with me if I do not write to my own little girl; and yet you are not a little girl now—you are almost a woman—a grown-up woman, and a clever woman, too, the very image of your dear mother, who—who is now an angel in heaven.”

Here a tear glistened in the eye of the speaker, and, turning to the table, he swallowed hastily a mouthful of tea, and then continued in a firm tone, as if he were issuing his commands to a file of soldiers,

“Come, it is more than time to be off. Are the trunks in?”

Caroline turned to bid adieu to Peggy, who stood with the corner of her blue-check apron at her eyes.

“Gude-boy till ye, Miss Carline, dear. And oh, hinnie! see that ye tak’ tent o’ where ye’re gaun i’ thae queer hieland places, and dinna fa’ ower ony o’ their

scaurs or rocks, o' whilk folk tell me there's a hantel there awa'. And dinna be ower fond o' trusting yersel' to thae fremd folk wi' the kilts, like Donald the piper, they're no vera chancy. Wattie has threepit on me that they dinna wear kilts in the hielands, but I ken better nor that. And here's a wee bit rowan-tree, Miss Carline," continued Peggy, producing a sprig of mountain-ash, supposed to be a sovereign remedy against charms and witchcraft; "I ken ye are laughing at me, but I wad like if ye wad pit it somewhere aboot ye, as I wad like ill if ony ill cam' to ye frae the poors o' darkness; you, that's aye been to me like my ain bairn. It will be a blithe day to me, and mony mair nor me, Ise warrant, that sees you come back to bonny —side. Oh, Miss Carline! dinna let ony o' the hieland gentlemen rin awa' wi' ye frae us. Ye'll sune be nippit up, I ken that; but bide i' the cosy lowlands, where ye was born and bred."

"Do not be afraid, Peggy, I shall not marry a kilted highlander; I dare say I shall never have the offer."

“My certie! set them up! They’re no sae donnart as that, though, I trow.”

They were now on the door-steps; and Wattie, drawing near, touched his hat, saying, “A pleasant journey till ye, Miss Carline. The hielands, they say, is a bonny place, but it will be lang ere ye see sic floors as ours. When ye’re i’ the gairden at Mr. Gordon’s place, ye may aiblins tell the gairdner, or the leddies, or onybody like that’s there, what bonny roses and fuchsias, and sic like, we have at hame, and hoo they’re no that ill keepit. Verbenas and petunias will no be growing outby in the hielands, I’m jalousin’. Ye ken a’ aboot these things, Miss Carline, whilk is na’ what ilka young leddy dis. It’s no a’ body that has a body at hand to tell them what they’re ignorant o’; and it’s aye been a pleasure to me to instruct you, Miss Carline, that was aye the bonniest floor o’ them a’,” said Wattie, evidently delighted with the wit and originality of the compliment. “Weel div I mind when ye was a bit skirling wean, and a bonny babbie ye was wi’ yer bits of glinting een, and unco fond aboot me,

I mind. And, now to see you sic a muckle leddy; and ye'll be coming back on us, I warrant, wi' yer hieland jo'. Aweel, aweel, Miss Carline, auld Wattie will be the first to wish you joy, and pleasure you to the best of his puir abeelities. If ye ha' a gairden to lay oot, or the like, dinna forget me."

"Indeed, Wattie, I shall not forget you, or—"

"Come, Caroline, we shall be too late," said the Major; and hurrying her into the carriage, they all drove off.

I shall not stop to describe the leave-taking at the coach-office; suffice it to say, that as soon as Caroline was seated, she let down her veil to hide the tears which dimmed her eyes, and had driven about ten miles ere she thought of looking at the country through which she was passing. Then, however, she raised her veil, turned her head to the window, and soon began to take an interest in the scenery. Not, however, that it was of a very striking nature; but to Caroline there was interest and amusement enough in watching the morning mists clear away

from the low pastoral hills, and in admiring the dew-drops as they glistened bright on the blades of grass, on the ferns, or on the low brushwood, the sole representative of trees in the country through which she was passing. The sheep and the shepherds, the brawling streamlet, the brae-side, with the fairy blue-bells trembling in the morning breeze, the scarlet poppy peeping out from a miniature jungle of long grass, the tall foxglove nodding by the wayside, the old dismantled border peel, ivied and moss-grown, were all to her full of novelty and delight. She remained all night in Edinburgh with a friend of her sister-in-law, and on the following morning started on the great north road. What an adventure it was to cross over from Queensferry in the little steamer ! and then, when she passed Lochleven Castle, who can describe the interest she experienced as she felt that she really gazed on the prison of Mary Stuart, and actually beheld the very loch into which Douglas had thrown the keys of the little fortress on the night of the Queen's escape. At Perth, Caroline was met by her brother.

By her third day's journey she was doubly enchanted; like the royal lady mentioned above, in the words of Hogg,

"She thought the land that gave her birth
The wildest, sweetest land on earth."

The only drawback to her enjoyment was the silent and unsocial disposition of her companion. Mr. John Irvine Gordon, the brother of Agnes, and the half brother of Caroline Irvine, was one of those persons whose minds are inclosed as it were in a prison, into which no window or chink affords a glance, and whose character, as far as it can be scanned, consists rather in its inscrutability than in any positive or known features. Mr. Gordon was a man about forty, of a tall spare figure, like his sister Agnes, and like her also in having a pale complexion and light eyes and hair; but his features were much larger and more marked, and his expression more thoughtful and saturnine. As to his character, I can only describe it by his actions and manners. He was an early riser, punctual and industrious, fond of country sports, fishing and shooting, at least so one might

suppose from his frequently indulging in those amusements, rather than from any enthusiasm he ever testified about them. He read too a great deal, and yet one could not well have called him an intellectual man. He never looked much pleased, and it was difficult to discover when he was satisfied; yet he was rarely out of temper, never said more than one word when he was angry, was liked, or at least his service was liked, by his dependents, and was quoted as an oracle by his wife, though stood in awe of by his children. He was, however, by no means what is called an easy man, as it was quite evident at Locharroch that his word was law, or rather his will, for that in his case seemed, somehow or other, discoverable without words.

On meeting Caroline he had shaken hands with her warmly, as far as the grasp went, but he had merely said, "How are my father and Agnes? You must rest for an hour, and get your dinner before we go out to walk." During the walk and the journey he was equally taciturn, replying only to Caroline's rapturous appeals about the beauty of the scenery

by freezing monosyllables, and annoying her by reading in the coach a large newspaper, which intercepted her view from one of the windows. He was careful, however, to procure everything necessary for her personal comfort, asking several times if she was hungry, or if she would have a glass of wine. The tone of his voice, however, in making these inquiries, bespoke neither tenderness nor anxiety. He seemed merely to be putting a plain question, to which he expected a plain answer.

On the evening of the third day after that on which Caroline had quitted Wallacefield, the travellers, after passing over a bleak moor, bounded by bleak hills, which closed into a narrow pass towards the north-east, entered a wild and romantic district, the hills again receding as they advanced, and the country widening into an open strath. They were now travelling in the Locharroch carriage, which had met them at the point where it was necessary to diverge from the coach road. The hills were no longer stony and barren, but for the most part clothed with heather, just bursting into bloom, and occasionally

covered or skirted by woods of Scotch fir. A stream of some importance wound through the strath, occasionally widening into little lochs, some of these set in frameworks of hills, purple and occasionally even green. The margin of the water, and the narrow glens or ravines between the hills, were adorned with natural wood, generally the light fragrant wild birch, or the dwarf oak. It was on a bright showery afternoon, a little before sunset, that Caroline drew near to Locharroch. The rain fell and the sun shone at one and the same time. Large white clouds floated about the mountains, their snowy piles contrasting with the intense blue of the sky, where it was revealed between the openings. The rain drops, which hung yet heavy on the leaves, glittered in the sunlight, and the wild spicy scent of the mountain birch, mingled now and then with a waft from the blue peat smoke as it rose from the roof of some turf-built hovel, was borne on the evening breeze. At last the carriage entered a fir wood. The tall, straight stems, with the dark foliage so high above, like a pall thrown over a

forest of pillars, formed a scene which delighted Caroline by its novelty. On emerging from the wood they left the main road to follow another, which led straight down to one of those river lochs alluded to above. At the further side of this sheet of water, embosomed in trees and backed by a high hill, a granite rock at the top rising above the heather, and the base as well as the shores of the loch skirted by oak brushwood, stood an old-fashioned but not picturesque mansion, at least with regard to architecture. It had a sloping roof, more chimneys than seemed necessary for the size of the building, a corresponding number of small windows, and a door in a clumsy square porch, evidently more modern than the rest of the structure, but like it composed of large blocks of rough-hewn grey granite.

"That is Locharroch, Caroline," said Mr. Gordon, quietly.

"Locharroch!" and Caroline in great excitement strained her eyes, to lose not a feature of the landscape. In a minute or two they entered the grounds by means of an approach which wound round the loch,

having the water on one side, and trees on the other. The carriage at last stopped before the porch, and Caroline was received in the doorway by her sister-in-law, who shook warmly both her hands, saying, "Welcome to the highlands, Caroline! Most welcome to Locharroch!"

CHAPTER VI.

CAROLINE, fatigued and sleepy, retired to bed at ten o'clock, and slept without intermission till nearly eight the next morning. When she descended to the breakfast parlour, she found the morning meal nearly over.

"Good morning, Caroline;" said her sister-in-law; "you are late, but I suppose we must excuse you after your journey, not however that I think a young woman in robust health need have been so desperately fatigued. I hope you found everything comfortable. If you want anything, mention it at once; I hate ceremony among relations, and I wish you to feel yourself quite at home in your brother's house." Caroline thanked her

sister-in-law, and then proceeded to take her breakfast, for which she was even more than usually disposed. While she is thus engaged, let us take a glance at the Lady of Locharroch.

Mrs. Irvine Gordon was a woman apparently between thirty and forty; above the middle height, of an ungraceful though not awkward figure, erect, spare rather than slender, with a flat back and high shoulders. Her complexion was somewhat sallow though not unhealthy, the contour of her face of that square conformation which is said to characterise the physiognomy of the natives of North Britain; her eye was blue, light, clear and penetrating, her forehead good, her nose straight, and her mouth large and determined. She wore a cap and was dressed plainly and handsomely, without show and without pretension; but equally without taste and without grace. Her whole appearance betokened decision rather than gentleness of character, sincerity rather than amiability.

“Now make a good breakfast, Caroline;” she said, helping her to fish,

egg, and honey. "Everybody has a good appetite at Locharroch. Nobody is ever ill here."

"I am glad to hear Locharroch is a healthy place; but indeed I am never ill anywhere. I have always a good appetite."

Mrs. Gordon looked satisfied, for like many very robust persons, she would not allow any one to be ill, unless the individual in question had actually a fever or a heart complaint, or something equally decided. She made an exception, however, in favour of her own husband, for knowing that he was a member of a consumptive family, she was frequently very apprehensive of his catching cold, and quite nervous whenever he was heard to cough. But such is the perversity of human nature, that whereas other people frequently *would* be ill, when they should not have been, Locharroch, in his wife's opinion, often *would not* when he should. It was the only subject upon which she ever disputed his opinion, or opposed her will to his. Perhaps my readers may think I am describing an inconsistent

character. Catherine Gordon was however very consistent, or perhaps I should say persistent, in maintaining her opinions unchanged. Like many others, she occasionally, however, made exceptions in practice. What a world this would be if every one carried out his opinions in all his actions! How impossible to live in it! Or perhaps, persons might thus be made to see the logical consequences of their opinions, which most persons do not see, and the world might improve in consequence. This is a problem however which I leave to more speculative heads than my own to solve, while I return to the conversation between Mrs. Gordon and her young guest. The former rejoined; "I am glad to hear you say so. For my part, I think if people would only think themselves well, they would very seldom be ill. I was half afraid that Agnes, who is one of the greatest coddlers I ever saw, might have persuaded you you were an invalid. I have no patience with delicate young ladies in general. It is all idleness and nonsense." Caroline did not quite agree

with her sister-in-law, as she saw no reason to disbelieve that many people really were ill; however, she was too busy eating her breakfast just then to enter into an argument. It struck her that Mrs. Gordon, though undoubtedly hospitable, was rather unfeminine and ungente in her manners; but then she had been accustomed to Agnes, who was the very personification of feminine gentleness.

“You have come quite at our gay season, Caroline,” said Mrs. Gordon; “all the world will soon be flocking to our moors. We shall have plenty of company for the next two months. Not however that seeing the highlands full of southerners is seeing them to perfection in my opinion. I would rather you could have seen them as they used to be when the chief resided in his own castle, and entertained his clanspeople as a chief should. We made a pleasant neighbourhood among ourselves then. But now all is changed. The chief lives down in the lowlands, or in London, or abroad, or anywhere but here; the clan is broken

up, and except Locharroch himself, there is hardly a Gordon of our own rank in the neighbourhood."

Catherine spoke with considerable feeling. Caroline felt interested. Although by no means perfectly certain that the breaking up of the clans was to be deplored on every account, there was something attractive to her imagination in the bygone days which her sister-in-law lamented, and something natural with which she could sympathise in the regrets of the latter.

"What has become of them all?" she inquired.

"Some gone one way, some another. The departure of the chief was the signal for the others to follow; and now their residences are sold or let, or ruined or tenantless. Even Ardennan, our own Ardennan, is no exception. Ah Caroline! it is a sad trial to me to see the home of my ancestors converted into shooting quarters for the Sassenach stranger, and my dear and only brother an exile from the land of his forefathers."

And Catherine's countenance lighted up

with a sort of mournful enthusiasm. She seemed to her young guest completely changed from the cold, harsh, uninteresting woman she had appeared but a few minutes before.

"You expect your brother home almost immediately?" the latter inquired.

"Yes, he is now in Paris. He arrived at Marseilles by last month's overland, and as he was coming through France at any rate, he remained a little longer, that he might have time to see all the sights of the gay capital. He met, besides, with a very pleasant party at Marseilles who were going to Paris, and it was an inducement to remain to travel with them. Oddly enough, too, one of the party, a Miss Smythe, is coming to Ardennan to visit the people who have bought it, so I should not wonder if they came all north together. But Malcolm will not suffer himself to be detained, I am certain, as soon as he touches British soil. He has a warm heart to the highlands and to his own people. It is very fortunate for you, Caroline, that your visit to us is to be while my brother is at home."

"I shall be very happy to meet Mr. Malcolm Gordon," Caroline replied.

Catherine sighed :—"That I should live to hear Ardennan called Mr. Malcolm Gordon! Yes, Caroline, it is very fortunate for you, as Malcolm is a man of no ordinary sense and intelligence. He was so when he went away, and his letters bespeak him unchanged. He is also perfectly free from assumption, and therefore, I have no doubt, will not consider even so young a person as you beneath his attention, and the conversation of a sensible man is an opportunity for improvement of which any young girl may be glad."

Here was a change for Caroline, accustomed to be listened to by her father and Agnes as a very wonder of talent, and just arrived at that age when a young and pretty girl expects homage rather than condescension from the opposite sex! She was upon the point of conceiving a prejudice against Mr. Malcolm Gordon, when she opportunely remembered that it would be foolish to do so, merely from his sister's anticipations with regard to his probable conduct, or rather motives. Catherine

was now on one of her favourite topics, and continued without seeming to notice Caroline's look of disapprobation—

“To think of a man like Malcolm Gordon, so well descended, a true Gordon in mind and manners, actually becoming a merchant. Little did I think, at one time, Caroline, that I should ever see a brother of mine in trade. Ah, poor Ardennan !”

“But how did Mr. Gordon happen to embrace a mercantile life, if it appeared so objectionable ?”

“My poor father, you see, Caroline, was not the most prudent man in the world. He had a noble highland spirit, and used to keep open house at Ardennan. He could not bear mean-spiritedness of any kind, and was the least selfish man I ever knew. Part of the Ardennan property had been mortgaged by my grandfather, and at my father's death it turned out that the estate was burdened with debt to its full value, and that instead, of there being any reversion for Malcolm, there were other debts to a considerable amount, and not a farthing to pay them

with. This was a great cause of distress both to Malcolm and myself, on account of the reproach it cast upon one whose generosity was the sole cause of his difficulties. Malcolm in particular, who was then quite a lad, not more than nineteen, was greatly distressed, and determined that he would spare neither labour nor exertion to pay his father's debts, for he had always a noble spirit. It chanced at this very time that a relation of my mother's,—an old batchelor, and the head of a firm of merchants in Calcutta,—happened to be in this country. He was said to be a benevolent man; and to him my brother applied for advice and assistance, stating to him his extreme anxiety to pay his father's debts. Our cousin answered this letter very kindly, saying that as he had many nephews and nieces, who of course had a greater claim upon him than cousins, he could not give him anything, but that he would lend him money to pay his father's debts, and would take him into his counting-house, and put him in a way of making a fortune for himself. Malcolm had been designed for the army,

and it was a sad downfall to his prospects, you may be sure, to be obliged to change the noble profession of arms for the vulgar one of commerce. But Malcolm said to me, 'Catherine, I have no alternative between seating myself at a merchant's desk and leaving my father's debts unpaid; and though it is the last profession I should have chosen, still it is an honest one, and who knows but I may be rich enough one of these days to purchase back Ardennan?' And so it was decided; but it was a great sacrifice."

"I think, however," said Caroline, "that you were both very fortunate in having so kind a relation; and, for my part, I see no degradation in being a merchant."

"It is foolish to repine at what cannot be helped; but certainly it is a strange profession for the Heir of Ardennan."

"And is your brother reconciled to it now?"

"He never says anything about it. It is ten years since he left Scotland, and I know at least that he longs for a sight of his native hills once more. He has a

true highland heart — a Gordon, every inch of him. He is a very handsome man, besides. You will seldom see so handsome a man as Malcolm Gordon. How well he would have looked at the head of a gallant highland company ! And that is where he should have been by this time, if all had gone right. But I am forgetting that I have not yet attended to my household duties, which I consider no woman is pardonable in neglecting. While I am busy, you may be amusing yourself in the drawing-room or in the library, where you will find plenty of books, or you may go out. I am told you are fond of drawing, and there are plenty of pretty views in the neighbourhood. As soon as Malcolm comes, we shall make a round of calls, so that you will have an opportunity of seeing the country, as we have few neighbours nearer than five or six miles.”

As soon as Mrs. Gordon was gone, Caroline betook herself to the library ; but finding that she could not concentrate her ideas this morning, she wandered out to take a view of the grounds.

They were not very extensive, but were very pretty and in great order. They skirted along the shores of the lake, and commanded a view up the river, and of the fine and rugged range of hills bordering the strath, which was widest on that side. On the opposite side the view was closed in by the pine-wood, through which Caroline had passed the preceding evening, the rounded summit of a high hill being just discernible above the dark shaggy tops of the trees. It was a fine, breezy, sunshiny morning. The air was full of the sweet wild scents of birch, and pine, and heather. It was just the day for the mountains, and Caroline seated herself on the lawn to drink in its various charms, and to watch the ever-varying lights, and shades on the hills, as they changed from gold and green to blue and purple and black. For the moment she was perfectly happy,—although, to confess the truth, she had not been quite satisfied with the manner in which she was treated either by her brother or his wife. It was true that they had not been wanting in any substantial kindness; but they had

treated her as any other young girl, as nothing in the least out of the common in any way; and Caroline missed the devotion of Agnes and the fond pride of her father. She did not feel at all certain that she should like Mrs. Gordon, so dogmatical as she seemed, and so full of highland pride. And as for Mr. Malcolm Gordon, if he were like his sister, she was by no means sure that he would prove an acquisition to the family party.

Caroline was not altogether mistaken in her idea of her sister-in-law's character. Mrs. Gordon *was* somewhat dogmatical, and had a superabundant fund of highland pride. But she had some good qualities also. Although deficient in that largeness of the understanding, in that candour which is the offspring of the good sense I cannot call 'common,' as it is the attribute only of the highest class of minds, she possessed rather more than an average share of both intelligence and good-feeling. She was a thoroughly well-principled woman, an excellent wife, a kind and attentive, if not a fond mother, and a reasonable and just, though a strict

mistress. Catherine Gordon was a woman whom it was impossible not to respect. She was by no means an illiterate woman, nor even without an appreciation for poetry of a certain class. But her taste, like her opinions, was contracted. Educated chiefly among her own mountain fastnesses, with a very circumscribed circle of acquaintances, and without that investigating temper and those wide sympathies which frequently atone for the want of a varied intercourse with society and the advantage of hearing all opinions fairly discussed, she was not a little of a bigot. She was also a great worshipper of authority,—in literature more especially. Catherine pinned her faith to certain reviews, and rarely ventured to admire a work until it had received the stamp of their approbation. Indeed, she had even been known to refuse reading a book, with the praise of which all the world was ringing, because it had been abused in the —— review, the writer of the article all the while, probably, influenced to censure by some personal pique against the author. But as soon as a work had received the

necessary sanction, no one was quicker to discern its peculiar merits than Catherine ; for, like not a few persons in this world, she possessed more good sense and good feeling than she ever permitted herself to make use of. And here I may remark, that it was precisely because her opinions were not her own that she was a bigot. Those who have sought out truth for themselves with the labour and care demanded by the importance of the search, best know how many are the avenues which lead to Error, and how plausible are the forms she assumes, and can thus best make allowance for those who have strayed into her paths, or been seduced by her seeming comeliness. There is a closer connection between originality and charity than the world in general seems aware of.

But to return to Catherine. Her highland pride was a compound of hereditary prejudice, the natural inclination of the human heart to cherish that which tends to magnify the individual importance, and an unfeigned though mistaken patriotism, united with genuine warmth of feeling. Country and honour were, in Catherine's

mind, indissolubly associated with family and clan. She loved, and would have died for any one of them. Had she lived a few centuries before, she might have been a heroine. Had circumstances required, Black Agnes, the famous Countess of March, who so gallantly defended the castle of Dunbar, when besieged by the English forces, in behalf of Edward Baliol, would not have been more redoubtable. Everything highland she passionately loved, and everything just as it was. The finest music in the world was to her ear inferior to a pibroch, and the finest instrument to the bagpipes among the mountains. She doted on Ossian's Poems, which she firmly believed to be genuine, and being a Gaelic scholar, or rather Gaelic being her vernacular, she solemnly averred that she had read many other poems in that language quite equal to those of the bard of Fingal and Morven. And perhaps she was right; for, as I, for one, am no Gaelic scholar, I cannot gain-say her; but, on the contrary, have heard the same asserted on very credible authority. The one-sidedness of Catherine's

views, together with the warmth of her character, combined to make her also very partial in her judgments where her own family were concerned. Her husband and her brother must be better and wiser than anybody else's husband or brother. To have blamed either in her presence would have been to incur her certain enmity; and she was what Johnson loved—"a good hater." Thus, what would have been "unpardonable extravagance" in another, was, in her father, softened into "thoughtless generosity." Conceit and affectation were her abhorrence. She had not "the least patience" with people setting up to be cleverer than their neighbours. She strongly suspected Caroline was conceited, and much spoilt at home; and accordingly she had made up her mind, by what she considered judicious kindness, to "bring the poor girl to her senses" while she was at Locharroch.

CHAPTER VII.

CAROLINE had not been much more than a week at Locharroch when Mr. Malcolm Gordon arrived. She was not present at the meeting between the brother and sister, so long separated; for, with instinctive good feeling, as soon as she heard the carriage-wheels in the avenue, she withdrew to her own room, that a stranger's presence might not check the freedom of their emotions or mar the confidence of their intercourse. It was not till the bell rang for tea that she descended to the drawing-room. As soon as she entered the room, she was introduced to Mr. Malcolm Gordon, who bowed politely with the air of a man who had mixed with the world, and then, without bestowing

any further notice on Caroline, turned to speak to his sister. As he sat at the opposite side of the table from our young friend, she availed herself of the opportunity to take a view of his outer man.

The first glance convinced her that he had no title to be considered so very handsome a man as Catherine had described him. There was a strong resemblance between the brother and sister; but Malcolm was undoubtedly handsomer for a man than Catherine was for a woman. Like her, he was tall, erect, and without any superfluity of flesh; but though not, perhaps, strikingly graceful, he was entirely without awkwardness, and all his movements and gestures were marked by ease and promptitude. In features, too, he strongly resembled his sister, although his were an improvement upon hers. The square contour of the countenance was greatly modified in him; his forehead, fuller and more expansive, was shaded by light-brown hair, waved without being curled; and his eye, of the same clear bright blue, was equally penetrating, and more mirthful, as well as more benignant.

His nose was not so straight; most persons would have considered it not quite so good as Catherine's; but hers gave a coldness and severity to her face, of which there was no trace in Malcolm's. His mouth, too, like hers, was somewhat, though not immoderately large, and full of resolution and character; but there was a slight turn at the corners scarce perceptible, save in its effects, which conveyed at once an idea of humour and benevolence. His complexion, naturally fair, was burnt of a sort of reddish brown by the sun of the Indies. His manner, and the tone of his voice, were equally open, frank, and decided.

Caroline had never seen Mrs. Gordon look so happy as she did to-night. Her happiness made her almost gentle, and gave to the expression of her eyes and to her manner much of the softness in which they were so deficient. Uncle Malcolm and the three boys became great friends immediately. For this evening, at least, he seemed quite to supplant Aunt Carry, who had hitherto been the favourite. Locharroch himself was more talkative

than usual to-night; that is, he asked three questions,—almost unparalleled loquacity for him,—to wit: “What kind of conveyance was used for transporting passengers across the desert from Aden to Cairo? Whether France seemed as well cultivated as England? And what was the accommodation and charges at the hotel in London, where Malcolm had spent a few days?” Having received plenary information on all these points, he replied by three “hems!” of satisfaction, and returned to the diligent perusal of the “*Times*,” his never-failing evening study. After the children were sent to bed, the brother and sister sat down together on a sofa, and began to talk over old days and family affairs. Caroline, feeling herself a sort of supernumerary, withdrew to a distant table, to write a letter to Agnes.

A few mornings after her brother's arrival, Catherine remarked:

“I have just been waiting for your coming home, Malcolm, to pay a round of visits. I thought you would like to see all our old neighbours who are left, and that if you did not care much about

our new ones personally, you might like to see their residences 'for auld lang syne.' "

"Thank you, my dear Catherine, but I have no objection to see the residents as well as the residences. Old friends are best, to be sure; but if one cannot have them, I see no reason why one should not give oneself a chance to make new ones. What say you, Caroline?"

"I like strangers. I like to see people I have never seen, and to go to places where I have never been. One feels so much more interested than when it is always the same thing over and over again. I should like to travel in an unexplored country."

"Nonsense! Caroline," cried Mrs. Gordon; "a pretty travelling *you* would make of it. You had better stay at home, and read Mrs. Ridgeway's works on the position and duties of women. She is the best adviser for romantic, extravagant-minded young ladies that I know of."

"I don't like Mrs. Ridgeway; she is sentimental, and that is worse than romantic. I never feel invigorated after reading her books. They never excite me

to noble thoughts; and, whatever you may say, I *should* like to explore an unknown country. I should like even to explore Victoria Continent. There is a fascination to me in the idea of that land of frozen mystery."

"Land of frozen fiddlestick!" cried Catherine; "and allow me to tell you, Caroline, that it is very unbecoming in a girl of your age to presume to have an opinion upon works to which you ought to look up for guidance."

Malcolm Gordon looked at Caroline with more attention than he had hitherto bestowed upon her.

"Charming, indeed, it must be," he said, "to winter among icebergs and glaciers, with walrusses for society, and trackless deserts of untrodden snow invitingly alluring one towards scenes more wondrous, perchance, than ever gladdened the eyes of Marco Polo, when he ventured to traverse the wastes of sand which led him to the golden Cathay."

As Malcolm spoke he smiled, but in such a manner that Caroline was not sure whether he was laughing at or sym-

pathising with her. As soon as she had left the room, Catherine inquired :

“ What do you think of Caroline, Malcolm ? I have had so much to say, that I have never had time to ask you till now.”

“ I never thought of her till this minute, except as a pretty, good-humoured looking young girl, very like other well-behaved girls of her age. But to-day I have discovered that she is more interesting. She *is* an interesting girl.”

“ Do you think so ? ” rather in a dissatisfied tone ; “ I see nothing at all uncommon about her in any way. She is, as you say, rather pretty, and I dare say not deficient in point of ability ; but she has evidently been quite spoiled at home, and is excessively conceited.”

“ Well, it may be as you say ; but still I must repeat, she *is* an interesting girl. There is about her a romance and an enthusiasm of disposition united, apparently, at least, for I hardly know her well enough to judge,—with an honesty and fearlessness of character all very promising and very pleasing.”

"But what could be more absurd or extravagant than to say she wished to go to Victoria Continent? It was either affectation or folly."

"Not affectation, certainly: absurdity and extravagance, if you will. But what will you say, Catherine," he continued, with the quiet humourous smile, and mirthful glance peculiar to him, "when I tell you that were it not so very absurd as to be almost impracticable, at least in the present state of science, I should like to go myself?"

"Nonsense, Malcolm!" cried Catherine, with a puzzled expression; "but I know you are joking. Ah! I see you are the same merry creature you used to be—always making fun."

"No fun in the present case, I assure you. I, too, like to see things I have never seen, and to go to places where I have never been. There is nothing I like so well, in short but—and it is only because I am getting old, I suppose, because I am nearly twenty-nine instead of seventeen, that I should like that."

"And what is that?"

“To settle down for life at Ardennan, among my native hills, and beside my own people.”

Catherine looked pleased. “That is what *I* should like, my dear Malcolm; I knew you were in jest. And then what could be more assuming than a girl like Caroline to pretend to criticise Mrs. Ridgeway, and set up her opinion, forsooth, in opposition?”

“I must plead guilty to never having read Mrs. Ridgeway. She is an oracle, I presume, from the way you mention her?”

“She ought to be considered so by young ladies.”

“She must be an oracle; for if she were a mere ordinary mortal, I do not see why Caroline has not as much right to have an opinion as she has.”

“Girls at Caroline’s age have no right to have any opinions but those of their elders.”

“And yet how grievously to be deplored it is,” said Malcolm, “and what a signal proof of human perversity it affords, that sometimes they cannot help it, and thus leave themselves no alternative between

hypocrisy and presumption! What an aggravation of their offence, too, when we consider the remarkable unanimity on all subjects which prevails among their elders!"

"Yes, all sensible people think pretty nearly alike."

"I believe they do; but what a grief it is to think that there should be so great a diversity of opinion as to who are the sensible people!"

"What are you talking of?" said Mr. Gordon, who, fishing-rod in hand, came into the room at this juncture.

"I was saying, my dear, that I think it a great pity Caroline should have been so dreadfully spoiled at home, and flattered into the belief that she is a great genius, when in reality she is nothing out of the common."

Mr. Gordon was fastening flies into his hat. He went on with his occupation while, without the faintest change of expression, and in his usual dry tone, he remarked, — "She *has* been spoiled; but Caroline is no fool."

"That is the very head and front of her

offending," said Malcolm; "she presumes to have an understanding."

Mr. Gordon made no answer, not even by a look; but walked out of the room, the slightest possible smile just visible on his countenance.

The following morning, Mrs. Gordon, her brother, and Caroline, commenced their projected round of visits. It was decided that they should begin with Ardennan. Mrs. Gordon had already been too long in calling upon the family of the new proprietor; Malcolm wished to inquire for Miss Smythe, one of his late travelling-companions, now staying there; he was anxious, moreover, to revisit his old home; and Caroline was curious to see Ardennan, of which she had heard so much.

Their drive commenced in silence on all sides. Catherine sat back in the carriage, seemingly in thought. Malcolm leaned forward, looking serious but happy, and as if in every tree and cliff, in every ferny brake and heathery knoll, he recognised the features of some old and loved friend. Caroline was too much absorbed in admiring the shapes and grouping of the moun-

tains, in watching the shadow of each cloud as, moved by the breeze, it glided softly over the hills, and in gazing with a sort of awe into the deep sunless chasms between, to mind conversation. Or when the startled moor-game rose with a whir, or the antlers of a deer were to be seen glancing amid the verdure of the oak-hag, or when the graceful creature itself on the crest of some steep and rocky eminence, stood, limned against the clear blue sky, gazing about with its bright wild eyes, the novelty of her impressions found vent in exclamations which sought no notice in return, but were merely the spontaneous expression of the delight she experienced. At last, however, her attention was arrested by a conversation which had just been commenced by her companions.

“What did you say was the name of the people who live now at Ardennan?” asked Malcolm.

“Ross, I believe. They are Glasgow people—*nouveaux riches*. They purchased it two or three years ago from poor Cameron, to whom you sold it; but this is the first season they have come to reside there.

I have not seen them yet, but I make no doubt they are thorough vulgarians. How does Miss Smythe happen to be acquainted with them ? ”

“ Her father was for some time Mr. Ross’s partner. Before Miss Smythe was born, indeed before his marriage, he removed to Liverpool, and though the partnership was dissolved, he always maintained a business as well as a friendly correspondence with Mr. Ross ; and at his death left him, in conjunction with Sir George Cornish, a relative of his wife, who was a lady of some family, the guardianship of his children.”

“ Ross ! Cornish ! ” said Caroline ; ” I wonder if the people you are speaking of are related to the Mr. Ross and Mr. Cornish I know.”

“ And what Mr. Ross and Mr. Cornish do you know ? ” inquired Catherine. Caroline explained ; and the whole party agreed that they must be the sons respectively of Mr. Ross, of Ardenнан, and Sir George Cornish. They had now arrived at a gate, which Catherine informed her young guest was the entrance to the Ardenнан grounds, and that the approach to

the house was two miles long. The approach was unlike any approach Caroline had ever seen before, and the character of the grounds was equally new to her. The road, which was winding and undulating, lay through a birch copse, of great extent but little density. The openings between the slight silvery boles, and through the airy foliage and pensile branches of the trees disclosed views of innumerable lochans or little lochs glittering in the sunbeams, and often lying at the foot of wild knolls covered by a luxuriant growth of heather and ferns, or overhung by ivy-clad rocks, topped perchance by a mountain-ash, its coral clusters glowing bright amid the dark leaves; the vista closed in the distance by a blue cloud-capped mountain. The fairy-like trees, the tiny gemlike lakelets, the sunshine, the glitter, the greenness, the fresh gentle breeze, the aromatic fragrance, were to Caroline as a dream of fairy land, and she almost expected some tiny elf in green to start from behind a holly-bush or a tuft of long ferns, and ask what mortals dared thus to intrude on her sylvan territory. At last

they emerged from the wood and found themselves in front of *Ardennan Castle*, as it was called, an old grey tower-like structure, built like *Locharroch* of rough-hewn granite, and half covered with ivy.

"On the other side," said Malcolm, "it faces the river, and the steep bank in the spring-time used to be in a perfect blaze with the yellow broom."

"It is so still;" cried Catherine, "and then the view from the drawing-room of *Lochan Achquaigh*! but you must look at it, Caroline, if we get in."

Mrs. and the Misses Ross, and Miss Smythe were at home, and the *Locharroch* party were admitted. But if all was unchanged without, naught was the same within. Everything was new, everything was fashionable; but though nothing was glaringly vulgar, it was evidently wealth rather than taste which had presided over the choice of the furniture and decorations. The drawing-room was a long room, rather low in the roof, with three windows at the end. It was literally so crammed with furniture of the richest and most massive description, that it was with

difficulty that a stranger could navigate his way through the rocks and reefs, which, in the shape of tables, ottomans, divans, and cabinets beset him on every side. The apartment was tenanted by three ladies. But it would not be treating them with proper respect to introduce them at the end of a chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE three ladies were Mrs. Ross and her daughters. The appearance of the former, at least, did not bely Catherine's anticipation that the Rosses would prove thorough vulgarians. She was an immensely fat elderly woman, magnificently arrayed in a dress of the richest and most costly materials, with a good-natured cook-maid sort of face, immense fat brown hands, loaded with jewels, a most outrageous Glasgow accent, and not the most grammatical style of language. Her manners, though homely in the extreme, were however free from that worst of vulgarities, the affectation of fineness. They were, on the contrary, perfectly natural and bespoke an unfeigned cordiality,

which, after all, covers a multitude of sins. Although she had never seen any of her guests before, she shook them all warmly by the hand, as if they had been old acquaintances.

“Well, it is very kind of you, Mrs. Gordon, to come all this way. I take it very kind, and I hope you’ll not make yourself a stranger. There are so few people in this part, and Miss Irvine, I am sure my girls will be glad to see you for a few days any time you like to come over. The young folk is much at a loss here for companions. Young folk doesn’t like the kind of dulness that does very well for the like o’ me. And I am very glad to see you at Ardennan, Mr. Gordon; I was afraid you mightn’t like to see us here. But I am sure if there’s anything you would like—and you’re welcome to shoot all over the property. But I am forgetting to introduce you to my daughters.”

The ceremony of introduction having been performed, Misses Maria and Isabella Ross bowed stiffly and seated themselves in company attitudes. They were good-looking girls, and very like each

other except that the younger was taller and fairer than her sister. With a family likeness to their mother, they bore a still stronger resemblance to their brother. They had dark eyes, brown hair, very nicely braided, small noses, slightly *re-troussés*, very plump, large and rosy cheeks, and rather unmeaning mouths. Isabella, the younger of the two, I have said, was taller and fairer than the other; but Maria had the most luxuriant hair, the whitest teeth, and the prettiest hands and feet. They were both handsomely and elaborately dressed, not in strikingly bad taste, but stiffly, and with over care. Maria's eyes were always cast down, and she spoke in a sort of whisper. She evidently intended to be interesting, and was decidedly the more affected of the two. Isabella was talkative; and on finding that Caroline was acquainted with her brother, immediately forgot the ceremony and reserve she had assumed to show her good breeding and her knowledge of polite society, and began to chatter in her natural manner.

“So you know Willie, do you? Now,

tell me what he was about? Was he flirting dreadfully? He is a terrible flirt; but then he is so much run after. Did you hear him play on the piano? He has an excellent taste for music. Even in Germany, where people have so much more taste than here for music, he was quite taken notice of. I remember he and the Countess Ida von Carlberg used to be constantly playing duets at Wiesbaden. Oh! Wiesbaden was a charming place — such lots of dancing and such delightful gentlemanly men. What flirtations Willie used to have with the Countess!”

“ Flirtations, Isabella ! ” whispered Maria, solemnly ; “ I do not call those flirtations. Unfortunately Ida had been betrothed, by her father, to one whom she could not love as — a man of high rank ! ” and Maria’s voice, as she concluded, became tragical.

Ere Miss Isabella had time to make any rejoinder, the conversation was interrupted by the entrance into the room of another young lady, who shook hands with Malcolm Gordon as with

an old friend, and was by him introduced to his sister and Caroline as "Miss Smythe." The very instant Caroline set eyes upon Miss Smythe, she felt convinced that she was a being of a different order from the Miss Rosses.

Violet Smythe was, indeed, a beautiful girl. She seemed about twenty-five years of age, or, perhaps, not quite so much, and was rather low in stature, but possessed a light, airy, and graceful figure, distinguished by an air of high-bred elegance, as rare as it is fascinating. The soft folds of a pale lilac morning dress harmonised with the delicate outline of her figure, and set off to advantage the extreme purity of her singularly fair complexion. Her features were small and delicate, though not regular, while a pale roseate hue, such as tinges the leaves of the celestial rose, just prevented her loveliness from approaching too nearly the cold beauty of an alabaster statue. A profusion of ringlets of the palest and softest brown shaded this fair face. The first impression her appearance produced was merely of uncommon personal

elegance, but a closer inspection led one to perceive that there was character in the carriage of that beautiful little head, and mind in the glance of that bright eye, whose clear azure hue rivalled that of the summer sky.

Caroline was enraptured. Ever alive to beauty in all forms, and, as I have already hinted, possessed of a singularly romantic imagination, she instantly took a violent *fancy*, as it is called, to Miss Smythe, and decided in her own mind that they must become intimate friends. Following out this idea, she had not been five minutes in the company of the beautiful stranger, before she had woven quite a little romance of all they were to be, and to do, to and for each other. Although he had not said very much about her, she had already heard Malcolm Gordon speak of her as clever, agreeable, and amiable, and Caroline had begun, somehow or other, to have an instinctive reliance on the soundness of Malcolm's judgment.

The present occasion, however, seemed as if it were little likely to promote the

growth of this future friendship, for having merely exchanged the customary ceremonious salutations with Caroline, Miss Smythe took a seat which had been set for her by Malcolm Gordon, and he, having placed himself beside her, they entered into an animated conversation, bearing reference chiefly to their continental adventures. Caroline felt that she would have given much to escape from the bald disjointed chatter of the silly, though seemingly good-natured Isabella, and the tragic affectation of her sublime sister, that she might have joined, or even listened to this conversation, but this she found was impossible. The young ladies evidently considered her their rightful prey. Meanwhile the two married ladies were getting on beautifully; Mrs. Ross was telling her guest how much she liked country life: "I am so fond of hens, and ducks, and geese, and making cheeses. Some of our folk doesn't like these things, but they are just my delight. And now, I am sure, you must all be hungry. Ring the bell, Isabella, and let's have up the lunch." Isabella slowly

obeyed her mother, but with an inward misgiving as to whether it were genteel to have luncheon at a first call. Her fears on this score, however, were set at rest, for as soon as they reached the dining-room, where they found the table rather plentifully than elegantly spread, Mrs. Gordon exclaimed, "This is real highland hospitality. You intend, I see, to keep up the character of Ardennan for good cheer and a hearty welcome."

Catherine was upon the whole much pleased with Mrs. Ross. Vulgar in speech and appearance she certainly was; but she gave herself no airs, was hospitable in the extreme, and sensible; for this Mrs. Gordon had discovered in a conversation about the management of servants and children, in which they had just been engaged, and upon which important topics they had cordially agreed. With the young ladies she had not been so much pleased. They were affected and fine-ladyish, two sins against propriety and common sense which Catherine could not pardon. With Violet Smythe, however, she was almost as much charmed as Caroline was; and, like Caro-

line too, she had made her the subject of a romance, or at least of a castle in the air, for a few calculations had entered into Catherine's vision of the future which were certainly not of a very romantic nature.

Violet Smythe had a large fortune, and no sooner had she seen how very lady-like, nay, distinguished-looking the latter was, and how agreeable she and Malcolm appeared to find each other's society, than it struck her what a suitable match they would make for each other. That any woman in her senses would refuse her brother Malcolm was of course out of the question, and Miss Smythe, in point of age, fortune, and appearance, was exactly suited to him. In birth, to be sure, she was not quite his equal; but she was well connected on the mother's side, and had no vulgar relations, so that that objection might be got over. Then if Malcolm married her, he need not return to India, and perhaps the Rosses might be induced to sell him Ardenнан; and that—that was the height of Catherine's wishes. She felt that she should be perfectly happy could she only see her beloved brother restored to the house of

his fathers. Like a skilful general, however, and an honourable-minded woman as Catherine really was, she determined not to breathe her wishes to a human being, least of all to her brother, and to employ no arts to compass the desirable end. She merely resolved that they should have abundant opportunities of seeing each other, and that she would leave the rest to themselves and to destiny. Like Miss Edgeworth's Mrs. Broadhurst, she had great faith in the effect of propinquity. Accordingly she invited Mrs. Ross and her daughters and Miss Smythe to return her visit very soon, and not to come merely for a morning call, but to waive ceremony, which nobody minded in the highlands, and drive over any morning and spend the day.

“When I was a girl,” said Catherine, “that was the chief kind of visiting we had. No stiff, formal invitations. We were all like the members of one large family, and wherever we went, there was always highland cheer and a highland welcome. But days are changed now, in the strath. You must excuse me, Mrs. Ross; but I

cannot help feeling a little sad when I think of the old times, and how everything is changed."

"'Deed, an' I am sure," said the lady she addressed, "it's very natural. I often think of the time when I was a bit lassie myself playing in the Gorbals. My father had a tailor's shop there long ago. Little did I think then, or when I married George either, for that matter, that I was ever to be mistress of a place like this. But him and me has got up in the world. Ay, Mrs. Gordon, as you say, ma'am, times change; but these were very happy days too, though we are far richer and grander now, no doubt; and I am glad too on the children's account."

At this speech of their mother's, the two young ladies looked aghast. Maria in vain endeavoured to maintain her tragic air. She looked most undignifiedly annoyed, and in her forgetfulness actually raised her eyes, and for a minute looked quite natural; while Isabella gave a slight hysterical giggle, and began to talk quickly, as if for the sake of talking, and not seeming to know very well what she said.

"I had a letter from Willie this morning, Miss Irvine, and he is coming here very soon; and oh! by-the-bye, Violet, I have had so many things to say to you since you came, that I always forgot to tell you he talks of bringing Mr. Cornish with him for a few days on his way to Maclaren Castle."

And Isabella seemed a little consoled by the idea of having a baronet's son for a guest. Caroline was seated opposite to Miss Smythe, and as Isabella mentioned Mr. Cornish's name, she noticed that for a moment a strange, perturbed expression shot across the fair face of the beautiful Violet, but so quickly that ere she could look again it was gone, and the countenance completely restored to its usual lively, unconcerned serenity.

"I hope it won't be the least disagreeable to you to see Mr. Cornish, Violet, my dear," said Mrs. Ross: "I know you're not as intimate with the family as you once was, and if you don't like the notion of him coming, I will write to Willie——"

"Thank you, my dear Mrs. Ross; you are always kind," interrupted Violet in her

natural tone, but with a slightly haughty elevation of her aristocratic-looking little head; "I certainly am not on the same intimate footing with Sir George Cornish's family that I once was; but we are still on friendly enough terms. I correspond with Lady Harriet Cornish, and if Mr. Cornish wishes to come to Ardenнан, I have no objection to meet him."

Mrs. Gordon now rose to take leave, and they were all shaking hands when Malcolm suddenly remembered that Caroline had not seen the view from the drawing-room windows, as she had been seated at the other end of the room, and they had all hastened down-stairs as soon as luncheon was announced, thus affording her no opportunity to change her position.

"Miss Irvine," he said, "is, I know, an enthusiastic admirer of fine scenery, and I wish her to see this view, for, though doubtless there is much finer scenery in the world, and even in Scotland, still I confess it has to me a wild charm which I never saw surpassed."

Caroline felt, she hardly knew why, much gratified by this speech. Although

she had only known Malcolm Gordon for a few days, she had a sort of intuitive conviction that he was a man of superior understanding, and consequently she had felt anxious that he should think well of her. Hitherto, though he had never lectured or advised her as Catherine had done, and though he had behaved to her with invariable kindness and politeness, it seemed to her that he had treated her too much as a child. She did not, except at the time when her vanity was a little nettled by some remark, care very much what Catherine thought of her; but she felt that if Malcolm would only treat her as an equal, or at least as a companion, that there were many points of sympathy between them; and she was anxious that he too should see and feel this.

Strange to say, however, with this belief, she felt more diffident and timid in Malcolm's presence than in that of any other person; for while she confided in his benevolence, she dreaded his ridicule. She was convinced that he was too good-natured to be satirical; but she had once or twice felt an uncomfortable

sort of consciousness that he was amused at her expense, and it was precisely because this amusement on his part was apparently combined with the most perfect goodwill that she did not like it. Had it seemed to contain the smallest particle of ill-nature, or conceit, or assumption, her spirit would have risen against it. But as it was, it only increased her wish to gain his esteem. She was therefore much gratified, more gratified than she had ever been by a compliment before, even of a much more decided nature, that he should have wished her to see the view he admired and loved, as if he had thought her opinion of some consequence, or her sympathy of some value. He had remarked, too, that she admired scenery; so that it was evident he did not think her absolutely childish.

Miss Smythe and Miss Ross accompanied them up-stairs.

"Here is the best point, Caroline," said Malcolm, who had advanced first towards the window. He placed her where he had been standing.

For a second or two no one spoke save Miss Ross, who, with her usual downcast glance, and looking out at the corners of her eyes, but so that it was impossible she could see the view, ejaculated in her usual tone of tragic affectation,—

“Sublime! How I dote on romantic solitude, far from the busy hum of the world’s glare!”

Caroline, however, heard as though she heard her not, for she was absorbed in the contemplation of the really fine high-land scene which now lay extended before her.

Immediately in front of the house was a strip, which could hardly be called a lawn, of the richest, softest, greenest turf, fringed by broom and furze, which continued to grow in dense luxuriance to the very foot of a steep though sloping bank, below which flowed the same river, that widening into a placid loch at Locharroch, was here a strong and rapid current. The opposite bank was rugged and precipitous, with here and there a stunted birch growing out of the rifted rock. Beyond was moorland, purple with wild thyme

and heather, and rising from gentle undulations by degrees into knolls, hills and mountains, joining the barrier chain which shut in the strath, and whose round or serrated, turfy or granitic summits now mingled with the clouds, or stood out dark and blue from the pale hazy sky. At intervals, in the far distance, cataracts of white and foamy mist poured down the deep hollows, like cloudy Niagaras. Not far from Ardennan, and embosomed in hills, an offset of this guardian range, lay a beautiful sheet of water, visible through an opening in its mountain framework. There it now reposed in the calm and the sunshine, still as glass, and of a deep, silvery blue. At the head rose straight out of the loch a lofty mountain, skirted by a belt of dark pine wood, every tree or shadow faithfully reflected in the still water; while every rocky headland, every green and copse-clad promontory, every cloud in the blue expanse above, was mirrored with equal fidelity. Never before had Caroline beheld a scene so lovely sweet, so wildly beautiful. She stood entranced—her heart full of deep

emotion. She felt her eyes fill with tears, and then, remembering where she was, looked up and met the glance of Malcolm Gordon. He, too, looked serious and somewhat moved; for, beautiful as the scene was to Caroline, it had for him a charm beyond what it could have for her—the charm of association. Perchance he had been thinking of the olden time when he had clambered those rocks in pursuit of the wild game, when he had fished those waters, or mounted to the peak of that mountain in all the careless glee of boyhood. Or perchance he had been thinking how long these moors and mountains, these woods and waters, had been the inheritance of his race, and how they had now passed away to an alien, while he, the heir of Ardennan, stood a stranger in the home of his forefathers.

“I see you admire it, Caroline,” he said. “I see you feel its beauty.” And he smiled kindly, and then humorously, as he continued in his peculiar tone between jest and earnest, “There is no land like the cold barren land of the Gael. Away with cultured fields, away with cosy

dwellings, away with comfort and plenty, and give me bleak mountains, turf-built hovels, cold and famine. They are far more romantic, and romance is better than comfort, eh, Caroline ? ”

And then he turned to Miss Smythe, who was smiling as if not a little amused.

“Do you admire the view ? ” he asked, in a different tone and with a different manner from that in which he had addressed Caroline. To the latter he had spoken with the familiar kindness of an elder brother ; the former he addressed with an air of deference and almost anxiety, which, however, had in it nothing of premeditation or obtrusiveness, but was tempered with the frank decision natural to it, and seemed merely the unconscious expression of his feelings.

Caroline noticed the difference, and felt a little mortified. She was beginning now, however, to be accustomed to not being the first person in company. Nay, she even began to have a suspicion that it was unreasonable to expect that she should. Once or twice the notion did glance across her mind, that her papa

and Agnes, and her friends at home, might have formed too high an estimate of her claims. Caroline, though a young and inexperienced girl, with many crude and foolish notions, had in her a germ of good sense, and this germ was already beginning to show symptoms of development.

In reply to Malcolm's question, Violet answered gaily, and with a sort of airy unconcerned sweetness, which seemed natural to her,—

"I admire it, certainly; no one could help. But I am much afraid I cannot compete in enthusiasm with Miss Irvine and yourself, or even Maria. I do not care for sublime solitude. To me there is no pleasure in the pathless woods—I feel no rapture on the lonely shore. I like agreeable society much better. In short I am very matter-of-fact; so I may as well confess it at once."

"Ah!" cried Caroline, "you don't mean that, I am sure. You are jesting, like Mr. Malcolm."

"No, I am not jesting, like Mr. Malcolm," she answered with a smile.

“Jesting!” cried Malcolm; “when do I jest? Such an accusation! But in real earnest, I agree with you, Miss Smythe, there is no pleasure equal to the pleasure afforded by the society of those we esteem or admire—no joy like the sympathy of humankind. I share the feelings of the poet who says,

‘What no one with us shares, seems scarce our own.’

And I never feel this more than when I am contemplating beautiful scenery. But I fear, Caroline, we are detaining Catherine too long.”

In their way down-stairs, Miss Ross expressed to Caroline a hope that they might become better acquainted. “I think you and I shall suit each other, Miss Irvine,” she said solemnly. “I find few people with whom it is not a labour to converse.”

On taking leave, Mrs. Gordon renewed her invitation to all the inmates of Ardenнан, adding that “Locharroch would call on Mr. Ross as soon as he came to the country.” She could not bring herself to call the latter Ardenнан, according to the almost universal highland fashion

of substituting the territorial appellation of a person's property and residence for his surname,—a very useful and indeed necessary fashion in a country where the same surname prevails over a whole district.

"I'm sure," answered Mrs. Ross, apparently much gratified; "you're most friendly and neighbourly, and I'm very glad of it. I dinna like all their grand new-fangled ceremonies, and I was that frightened you would be one of your grand stuck-up folk. I hope they've given your beasts plenty corn."

Catherine then turned to Miss Smythe to say,—

"I understand, Miss Smythe, you are a great equestrian. You will often ride in the direction of Locharroch, I trust. It is a pretty road, and we shall always be glad to see you."

"I hope you will, Miss Smythe," said Malcolm.

"I do hope you will," cried Caroline, with an earnestness which startled everybody; but which no one could suppose was affected.

Caroline felt a little chilled by the manner, though it was a kind one, in which Violet said,—“Thank you, I shall be very happy to come.” It seemed so unlike her own. For though to a certain extent it bespoke gratification mingled with surprise, it was quite devoid of the warmth and enthusiasm which had distinguished her fervently-expressed wish.

They commenced their homeward journey in the same silent mood in which they had set out from Locharroch, some hours before. Catherine was going on with her castle in the air. Malcolm—why Malcolm too, I suspect, was building a castle in the air. Caroline was thinking of a multitude of things,—past, present, and future, all at once!—of home, her father, Agnes, of the beautiful, interesting Violet,—and finally of the exquisite view she had just seen. Then she pictured herself able, at some future period, to paint that view in all its beautiful variety of wood and mountain, bold rock and still blue water, pale mist-wreath, massy shadow, and bright sunbeam. Oh, if she could only give to that vivid conception of beauty, in

her own mind, a visible expression ! But the time might come. She would labour as she had never done before. She would begin to-morrow. If she could not at first, she would not despair. She would work till she could. It seemed as if Malcolm's thoughts had been, part of the time at least, occupied by the same subject as Caroline's, for he broke the long silence by exclaiming,—

“How I should like to have a view of Loch Achquaigh, as it looked to-day !”

“I was just thinking,” cried Caroline, “how I should like to be able to paint one. I could not now, but some time or other, perhaps. I am determined to study and to work hard ; and if I should ever succeed in painting a good view of Loch Achquaigh, I will give it to you.”

“Thank you, Caroline,” said Malcolm, in a tone of sincere gratification,—“it will be a welcome gift.”

“But I fear it may be a long time ere I can do justice to it ; but I have resolved to persevere.”

“Then you will succeed.”

"Do you think so?—do you really? I shall try; I will not give it up."

Catherine felt quite pleased with her young sister-in-law at this minute. In the first place she had appeared anxious to gratify Malcolm; in the second she had seemed a little diffident of her own abilities, — she was improving under her guidance. Her visit to Locharroch would be quite the saving of the girl. In this benign frame of mind towards her, she said, encouragingly,—

"I dare say you could take a little pencil-sketch of it now, for Malcolm; or even, perhaps, try a little water-colour, or Indian-ink drawing. Some of your sketches are not amiss at all."

Not amiss at all! Caroline would have been mortified, had she not already discovered that though Catherine could see when a drawing was crooked, or in bad perspective, or coarsely daubed, or unnaturally coloured, she had no feeling of the poetry either of art or nature. She answered,—

"Oh, I dare say I might make something like the shape of the mountains;

but I know I could not make it look as it looked to-day. I could not make it like my own idea of it at this moment. I never can draw anything like the things I see in my own mind; and I would not attempt a view of that beautiful Loch Achquaigh, unless I could really do it well,—like a real artist."

"Conceit again!" thought Catherine. "A real artist, Caroline! the idea of your setting up for a real artist! Do you not remember that Mrs. Ridgeway says it is much better for a woman to know how to do a great many things tolerably than one thing thoroughly."

"Ah, but the old adage says that, 'What is worth doing at all is worth doing well.'"

Malcolm's humorous smile was barely perceptible for a single instant. "In this case," he said, with a quick glance at his sister, "I think the wisdom of our ancestors is true wisdom. I agree with John Foster, in thinking that it is of great importance to the character to have a taste for the sublime,—particularly for

women, the details of whose life are necessarily made up of so much that is petty. Nor do I see that the doing one thing excellently is to prevent them doing other things tolerably, but the reverse. Even if that one thing in itself should never be of much practical value to them,—the mental habits the pursuit of it has induced will be available probably in most of the affairs of life.”

“Who was John Foster?” asked Catherine.

Again Malcolm smiled. “A Baptist minister, an ultra-radical, and a violent voluntary.”

Catherine looked horror-stricken. “My dear Malcolm, you don’t mean to say that you approve of the opinions of a person of that kind?”

“Most certainly not of all his opinions. I disapprove entirely of some of them; nevertheless he was a great man and a good one,—and in the main, his views of human life and human conduct were not more elevated and forcible than they were correct and practical. I remember in his

life, there is a letter addressed to a young lady,—which you, Caroline, I am sure, would like, recommending the cultivation to the very uttermost of all the faculties the Creator has bestowed, as a solemn duty ; without which His purpose in our existence cannot be fulfilled. I have his life, and will look out the passage for you this afternoon.”

“Thank you, Mr. Malcolm. I do indeed wish to cultivate my mind ; but I am so lazy sometimes. I seem to do everything by fits and starts ; but I hope, now that I am grown up, I shall have more perseverance. Oh, Mr. Malcolm, I wish to know, and to do, and to be, so many things. I do hope I shall never become a gossiping old woman, rushing about from house to house, collecting and spreading news as to how Mrs. So-and-so has been shamefully extravagant in buying a new green silk ; and Miss Such-an-one quite despicable, in the way she flirted the other night with that silly goose of a young man.”

“Bravo, little satirist !” cried Malcolm.

Then laying his hand kindly on her arm, with a sort of half-paternal fondness, he quoted from one of Wordsworth's sonnets :

"Thy thoughts and feelings shall not die,
Nor leave thee when grey hairs are nigh
A melancholy slave ;
But an old age serene and bright,
And lovely as a Lapland night,
Shall lead thee to the grave."

Caroline returned no answer ; but she leant back in the carriage, and made more strenuous resolutions than ever to paint one day, a view of Loch Achquaigh,—and to paint it for Malcolm Gordon.

CHAPTER IX.

MRS. GORDON had given Caroline a tolerably correct account of the reasons and motives which had induced her brother to embrace a mercantile calling, and for the best part of his life voluntarily to become an exile from that misty and mountainous northern land which, like herself, he loved with a passion.

Malcolm Gordon was an only son. His mother had died ere he was old enough to appreciate such a loss; and till he had reached the age of twelve, he was allowed to scramble up in the world pretty much as he chose. True, he was taught to read and write at the parish-school, situated in a clachan about seven miles from Ardenan, the road which led to it being

passable in snow, so that his journey generally underwent interruptions for three weeks, and occasionally for any months at a time, every summer he was accustomed to his daily journey on the back of a dog and sheltie. At this school he had a limited acquaintance with history and geography, and had made some progress in Latin as to be "in the way." He had also read abridgments of Livy's Histories of Greece and Rome, and knew—perfectly well—that he had been nursed by a wolf, and he had a confused recollection of the Sibyl's predictions with the books. Hannibal, Scipio, Epaminondas, Miltiades, the Great, were tolerably familiar; but except what concerned his own life he forgot as soon as read. He sometimes thought, that when he grew up to be a man he would try to be like himself, such as they were. We never, however, to suppose from this that he was ignorant of the moral delinquencies of—the Great, for instance; rather, that he was not aware of them. The moral

sense was not yet developed in him. The boy merely thought he should like to be a hero—an aspiration which the whole tenor of his education contributed to cherish. I have little doubt, that if any one had represented to him in clear terms the folly and wickedness of sacrificing the lives and happiness of millions of human beings to mere mad, personal ambition, he would have recognized and acknowledged at once the truth of the argument. But no one had ever done so ; and as a boy, Malcolm Gordon was rather active and bold than thoughtful. Moreover, he was influenced by the opinions of those around him ; and it is only injustice or personal ill-usage that makes children in general doubt the superior wisdom of their parents or teachers. Veneration is usually much earlier developed than judgment.

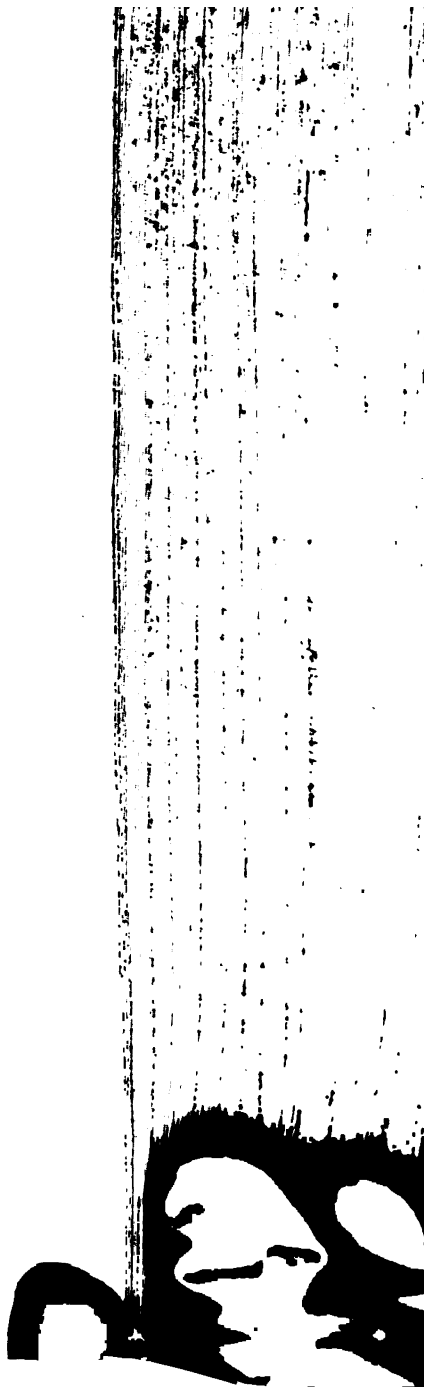
Such as I have described were Malcolm's early literary acquirements ; but he had been receiving another education, of a different description, from the circumstances by which he was surrounded. It was only a short portion of the day he passed at school, and the rest was spent

bing the giddy cliff in search of the nest, in rowing the boat on the accompanying the deer-stalkers in exciting sport on the clear moon-nights, or spearing the salmon by light on the dark ones; or in winter, shooting wild ducks and woodcocks, or following the sea-birds that come inland to the shores of the frozen lochs for shelter and food. No "mountain imp" was more "hardy, bold, and wild" than James Gordon. He feared nothing; the daring of his spirit was only checked by the health and vigour of his body. He was, moreover, full of fun and mischief, and there was no end to his jests and jokes. He was never out of a scrape or another. Still there was something ingenuous and honourable in the boy—something frank and open in his face, which rarely failed to win the goodwill of all who saw him. Occasionally, too, symptoms of a more heart would display themselves, in all the roughness, mischief, and want of recklessness of his character. For instance, when yet a mere

child, he expended his all in purchasing from a pedlar, as a present for his old nurse, the most ludicrous of imaginable chimney-piece ornaments, in the form of an earthenware dish, in shape and colour bearing more resemblance to a cabbage-leaf than to anything else (and it was not even very like that), filled with the brightest red and yellow pears of the same material, forming altogether one solid lump. Not, however, that he was a remarkably tender-hearted child, or gifted with any refinement of feeling very superior to that usually displayed by the juvenile members of his sex. Though we sometimes see something like tenderness of heart in the little fellow in petticoats, we rarely behold it in the school-boy. Many men are as tender-hearted as any woman ; but sensibility, with them, is usually a later development, though women, too, generally possess more of it than girls. Sensibility is the offspring of thoughtfulness as well as kindness ; and thoughtfulness is not very common in the young, active, and healthy.

At twelve Malcolm was sent to the High School of Edinburgh, and boarded in the

one of the masters. His school was much like that of many other schools; he held a fair place in his class, but did not distinguish himself. He was fond of mirth and fun to be very amiable, and liked marbles and cricket better than Latin Grammar or the Greek Lexicon. He was not, however, without literary tastes; he was fond of novels in general, and of romances in particular. Dominic Sampson's delight, more especially where he was described as visiting Meg Merrilies in the neighbourhood of Derrnacleugh, and being entertained by her on the famous pottage; it would be difficult to say how much he enjoyed the Antiquary's adventures, or his setting out on his memory-ride in the Hawes Fly, or Queensberry's vengeance. But of all books, Don Quixote was *the* book; its lofty poetry, its humour were alike charming to him, though he was then quite unconscious of it so delighted him. He was in his happy age, when one is content to enjoy without asking the wherefore. He was a great favourite with his colleagues and pupils, and was generally



described as a merry fellow, with a fine, manly spirit. From school he went to college, and there he began to study in earnest. Then first began to be developed in him that spirit of patient labour, which afterwards made so conspicuous a part of his character. The truth was, Malcolm's ambition had been awakened. He discovered, or he imagined, that he had hitherto wasted his talents and opportunities, and he now determined to make up for lost time. With him, to determine was to act. The same energy, courage, and decision, which had already rendered him distinguished in out-of-door sports and exercises, united with naturally good parts, now began to promise success in this new pursuit.

But Malcolm became no pale and pensive student. If he was at times more thoughtful and more abstracted than in former days,—if, when at home for the vacation, he was to be seen oftener with his book, and seldomer with his rod and gun,—he had the same ardent, hopeful spirit, the same turn for fun, and when he was merry, the same happy laugh,

od's, straight from the heart. The rest of the family, he was his country, his birth, his clan, in many other of their feelings (as the reader will) he also was destined for the army, enthusiastic about the profession he was intended.

Malcolm Gordon at the age when his father died, leaving his irretrievable confusion. Malcolm at the loss of his family inheritance on account of the loss of because Ardennan must pass stranger. He had youth, health, and with the sanguine spirit of he did not doubt that he could road to fortune and distinction

But even this grief dwindled, when a little further investigation revealed the load of debt which his father's memory. It was the sound moral feeling and sense of the young man broke the surrounding mists of high-land hereditary prejudice. The only knows the step he took, and

the result. To become a merchant! To forego the glittering dreams of military glory in which he had indulged! Malcolm felt it as keenly as Catherine; like her, too, at that time, he felt that he was entering a profession derogatory to the dignity of the heir of Ardennan. All his tastes and habits, his feelings and prejudices, were alike opposed to it. But if trade was undignified, he perceived at once, with the force and clearness of intuition, that debt incurred by wilful extravagance was disgraceful. And when he reflected that there was no other way to cancel the disgrace which rested on his name,—when he thought of those whom his father's thoughtless selfishness had involved in poverty and ruin,—he felt, as every rightly constituted mind must have felt, that he had no alternative. He resolved upon the sacrifice, as he then considered it, and he resolved, too, to make it cheerfully—to cast no lingering look back upon past hopes—to waste no vain regret upon what might have been. Perhaps the reader may smile at Malcolm's magnanimity, and think it was no magnanimity at all. Perhaps he

him a very lucky fellow, and ought to have been too thankful. Undoubtedly the common-sense subject; such, in after years, like the view Malcolm himself

But there is no greater mistake to judge every one by the same. Self-conquest and self-denial are acts of virtue; and even if these are exerted to surmount a cherished passion, the successful effort is magna-

He went to India; a new and a new world opened before him; new principles, a new standard of right, and propriety were held up to his

At first he was a little shocked, very puzzled; then he began to question his former notions, and the notions of those by whom he was now surrounded by slow degrees commenced forming an opinion for himself. He found himself happy in India. True, more so at first, he did not find his employment very congenial; the climate at times was often overpowering; and he has a fond recollection of the free,

fresh air, the blue, misty mountains, and the wild and healthful sports of home. But he was industrious and prosperous, and he kept ever before him the hope of returning to that beloved northern land. He had ample time for reading, and was well supplied with books. But he was of a social disposition, and not only read, but went a good deal into company; so that his opinions were rather those of a man who had mixed with the world, than of a mere bookworm. He was, too, kind-hearted and humorous as ever; while at the bottom of his soul, visible but to a few, and latent rather than active, lay a hidden spring of poetic and chivalrous feeling. Those who understood him could perceive, that even when he seemed playfully to mock at such things, he really sympathised with them. He seemed to possess a sort of faculty for exposing all kinds of pretension, false sentiment, and ungrounded assumption. No kind of affectation seemed able to subsist in his presence, but to shrink and shrivel away before his keen perception of the ludicrous, and his unsparing, though perfectly benevolent exposure of it.

h was Malcolm Gordon, when, after
sence of ten years in the east, he
ed to Europe. He had landed at
lles with the overland-mail, and was
ing through France, when chance
t him acquainted with a party of
h tourists, on their return from a
er sojourn in the north of Italy, after
wintered at Rome. Forming one of
arty was Violet Smythe. At their very
meeting he had been much struck by
gular and refined style of her beauty.
d also been fascinated by her con-
on, at once so lively, and so free
he vulgarity of noise and obtrusive-
She was, in his eyes, the beau-ideal
yhood. Malcolm Gordon, like most
men possessed of any imagination
eptibility, had been, or at least had
ed himself, several times in love.
ome years, however, those little
l feverish attacks had been becoming
and rarer, and for the last three years
ad ceased entirely. He felt at once
Miss Smythe was of a different order
nan from any he had ever met before,
at the sentiments he had begun to

entertain for her were of a different order of sentiments. Hitherto, he had loved as a boy,—now he loved as a man. Formerly, his love had been but the child of his own imagination, which had, as it were, *possessed* the first fair form or smiling face that came in his way. But *now*—now he understood what it was he loved. Now the beauty, and the grace, and the gentleness, the intellect and the amiability of Violet Smythe alike enchanted him. She was sensible, too; for one day when a conversation had arisen on the value of birth, and when some one asked her if she did not despise it, she answered,

“ I might have despised it, perhaps, had I been well-born, but as I am not, as my father was a merchant, and my grandfather a hosier, and my great-grandfather I know not what, I do not despise it. It seems to me that we ought only to despise the advantages we possess. Whenever I hear a plebeian loudly asserting his contempt of birth, or a commoner his contempt of rank, or a plain woman her contempt of beauty, I am apt to suspect they do not despise them so much as they suppose. Contempt is

expressed by indifference, not by de-
spise."

"But you are well-born on your mother's
side of the house, Miss Smythe," said the
man who had previously addressed
her, "you are connected with one of the
families in England."

He spoke, Malcolm remarked that a
shadow, as if caused by some painful re-
membrance, passed momentarily over the
lively countenance of Violet Smythe.
The first time he had seen a shadow
and he wondered what it could mean.
She smiled quickly, however, and in her
usually gay tone, and unconcerned man-
ner she answered,

"I am connected with one of the oldest
families in England, but I bear my father's

"I am a Smythe, and I wish he had
changed the spelling of it. I have no
reason to shine with a borrowed light,
derived from the ancestral honours of the
House of Cornish."

"According to your own theory, then,
Miss Smythe, you have a right to despise
me as you are wealthy. Do you despise
me?"

"No, I do not despise riches in one sense. I do not despise riches as a means of obtaining comforts and luxuries, and perhaps of—of trying to do a little good," she said with a sort of hesitation and carelessness which Malcolm attributed to modesty, and which convinced him that she gave away a great deal, "but in another sense I do despise them; I despise the consequence they bestow; I despise the homage they bring me, and those who pay it."

This was all gaily said, and Malcolm answered,

"But surely you do not attribute all the homage you receive to the accident of your wealth?"

For a second Violet glanced at the open manly countenance of the speaker, and answered in a pleasant tone,

"No, I do not. It may be vanity on my part; but I think, I believe that some few like me for myself."

Malcolm felt as if a great load had been taken from his mind. It was clear that Violet did not confound him with her mercenary acquaintance. She thought well of

herefore he might hope. And, that if integrity, disinterested-love were of any value, he was rather unworthy even of Violet. He thought that he could make ; but at the same time he was she had given him no reason to at she entertained towards him ents warmer than those of mere friendliness. Her manner was d unconcerned to warrant any position. But then he had never et to show anything beyond—at beyond—a common interest in they were to meet in Scotland, he trusted they would have rtunities of cultivating the in- auspiciously begun. Malcolm everything must go right in the

interview with her on the occa- visit to Ardenнан, related in the chapter, had a little disappointed as true Violet had received him usual pleasant and graceful gaiety, n she had been kind and agree- ould not conceal from himself

that there had been, in her manner, no consciousness, no confusion, no softness beyond its usual gentleness to indicate that she felt any of the kind of interest in him that he felt in her. But he would not despair. He would watch and wait, and endeavour to win her love. And yet he would not madly build all his future on a hope which might have no foundation.

CHAPTER X.

TE, according to her resolution, ously to work upon her painterine predicted that her energy last. Malcolm said,—“ We

hed her with interest, for there hing about the young girl's which pleased him. Catherine, gh she still saw much that ensible in her sister-in-law's hough she was particularly at the boldness with which l dissent from some great and audaciously venture to herself, could not help liking was so pleasant-tempered, so fond of the children, so easily

amused, and so much delighted with highland scenery and highland ways, that Mrs. Gordon could not help acknowledging that she was a very loveable girl. Then, too, she was never ill, and that was a great merit in Catherine's eyes.

Caroline had been about three weeks at Locharroch, when she received a letter from Agnes, telling her, among other things, that their father, through her uncle, Mr. Purves's means, had been enabled to make a very advantageous investment of all the ready money he possessed, in fact, of his whole fortune, with the exception of Wallacefield, and his half-pay, in some kind of banking establishment in Glasgow, of which Mr. Ross was a director. "Dear papa seems quite in spirits about it," wrote Agnes, "as he says it will enable him to leave you and me quite little fortunes. He is always so kind. He is constantly speaking about you, dearest Carry; but you must not think of hurrying home, he bids me say, if you are enjoying yourself."

Caroline read this aloud at the breakfast-table.

must have a very kind papa,
said Malcolm.

very kind," responded Caroline,
ing eyes; "the kindest in the
is so fond of me,—and I do
uld do anything for him."

ch now looked up from his
on.

my father had consulted me
tered into any speculation."

you do not think there is
rong?" cried Caroline, a little
my uncle is reckoned a good
an, and sharp-sighted enough
interest, and Mr. Ross, to
e specimen of his wealth we
lennan, cannot hitherto have
ed in many unfortunate specu-

may be nothing wrong, but I
rove of these gambling specu-
er brother answered, with his
m.

ng! oh John! There cannot
bling in the case, or I am sure
have had nothing to do with it."
her is as ignorant of business

as you are, Caroline. He does not know he is gambling."

"Do you think there is much danger?"

"No. And as the thing is done, it cannot be helped."

As Mr. Gordon spoke he drank off his tea, pushed away his cup, and left the room. Catherine followed him, and Caroline walked to the window. She had been standing there for a minute or two, when she felt a hand laid lightly upon her shoulder. It was Malcolm.

"I do not think you need be alarmed, my dear Carry," he said, kindly.

Caroline had a heart ever alive to kindness. When she raised her young, ingenuous face to his, her bright eyes were glistening.

"Oh! I am not much alarmed. I was only thinking, in case anything *should* go wrong, of poor papa at his time of life."

Then she added, laughing, "I must be busier at my drawing than ever. Who knows but I may have to gain my livelihood yet as an artist?"

"You are a dear, good girl, Carry," Malcolm replied, with a smile.

ou are laughing at me, Mal-
l Caroline, half gratified, half
ou always laugh at me. You
you thought me quite a child.
ou think it quite ridiculous of
se I can ever be an artist ? ”

ry, I don't think it ridiculous
you must labour and study
ng years first. Dear girl ! you
what lies before you in such a
t on, Caroline ; but, unless cir-
oblige you, take my advice,
our paintings to please your
amuse yourself. You have no
f the anxieties and mortifica-
wait upon every public career,
a child, Caroline.”

colm glanced at her with a look
ic and deprecating. Caroline
head at him reprovingly, and
at she felt a little vexed, not-
g, that he should think her

arroch family now saw a great
Rosses and Violet Smythe, the
especially. She had twice or
t the day alone at Locharroch,

and sometimes even remained all night. Malcolm, his sister, and Caroline, were all equally enthusiastic in her praise. Locharroch said she was a "pretty, lively girl," and that was saying a great deal for him. To Caroline's great delight, she and Violet were now established friends. To tell the truth, Malcolm had given Miss Smythe a hint of the enthusiastic admiration that Caroline entertained for her, and of her ardent wish that they might become intimate. Flattered and amused, Violet at once expressed the pleasure she should have in cultivating Miss Irvine's acquaintance. Malcolm then gave her a sort of sketch of Caroline's character, that is, according to his own idea of it, concluding by saying, "You will, perhaps, find her rather juvenile for a *friend*, in the fullest acceptation of the term; but I think you will be interested in her fresh, unsophisticated character, and amused by her *naïve* intelligence, for it is really wonderful at times how apt are her remarks, and how wise is her simplicity."

It was very good-natured in Malcolm certainly to endeavour thus to gratify

ut only half-suspected by him-
another motive in wishing to
his intimacy. Although, as the
t have seen, he was far from
sh man, his zeal was, in this
t a little quickened by self-inter-
er can I venture to assert that
te unconscious himself of his
leness of motive, for on one oc-
he had been telling Violet how
roline was to see a great deal
might have discerned a slight
mile, and a momentary glance
usement at his own expense,
which seemed to say—"Ah
so you too can manœuvre."
the more Caroline saw of her
, the more she was charmed
Her grace, her beauty, her
her superiority in age, in
of life and society were all
to work upon the imagination
thusiastic and inexperienced
et spoke of things as familiar
day—of London, that mighty
ful city; of Rome and Venice;
palaces, and sky-piercing moun-

tains, things which to Caroline were as myths and fairy tales; while Violet in her turn was charmed with the undisguised admiration of her young companion, and amused by the originality of her remarks; although the latter perhaps she could hardly appreciate, as in reality Violet was not Caroline's equal in point of mind.

It was now near the end of August, and Mr. Ross, senior, Mr. Ross, junior, and Mr. Cornish had all arrived at Ardennan. They were all sportsmen, particularly the two younger gentlemen, and generally spent the greater part of the day on the moors. Mrs. Ross, however, who did not see why the girls should not be amused as well as the gentlemen, resolved to have a series of pic-nics and dancing parties. Accordingly, the very evening after the arrival of the latter, Malcolm and Caroline were invited to dinner at Ardennan, together with all the younger neighbours, in number amounting altogether to about a dozen. Caroline was received with great cordiality by the whole family.

pe you've had a pleasant ride dear," said Mrs. Ross, "and you left your brother and his wife that your friends in the south when you heard from them. s telling me he is well acquainted r uncle and aunt; good worthy must be, and have been very aving him often at their house. comes my good man," she cons a portly, middle-aged, but ntlemanly - looking man with hair entered the room. He Caroline with plain unaffected and then inquired if the rest of any were come, and where were g men. He looked like a man of a large share of practical sense, mingled with not a little his own success in life. He did his children, attempt to disown rigin; on the contrary, he preferred to it with pride, though detail, as his simple-minded wife am a man of the people," he ne habit of saying, "and I am my class." He had nevertheless

a great reverence for birth and rank, and though too sensible to be guilty of open or gross toadyism, always took care to make himself as agreeable as he possibly could to persons possessed of a high social standing. I question if his daughters were more delighted than he was at entertaining a baronet's son, but *he* kept his satisfaction to himself. Neither was he insensible to the pride of being master of so fine an old place as Ardennan, while he entertained as his guest its former proprietor. Seldom had Mr. Ross been happier than he was that evening. It seemed to him as if at last, after all his years of toil and patience, he actually stood on the summit of one of those Alps of life which he had striven so hard to climb. But "Alps on Alps arise." To marry his children well, that is greatly, was now his object. What if one of his daughters should marry Mr. Cornish? They were good-looking girls and had been expensively educated. It was not impossible; and yet he could not help acknowledging to himself that Violet Smythe, or even the little girl to whom

and just been introduced, possessed a
ess something which was wanting
daughters, and which seemed to
them fitter to rise to a higher

What this was he did not know ;
and not perceive that it was ease,
ness, and an entire absence of that
de about etiquette and manners,
invariably defeats its own aim.
en his girls had money, and in Mr.
opinion, everything was to be had
oney. No galley-slave had ever
harder than he had toiled, and was
for money. Not that he was
ous, for his expenditure was
but simply because he believed
oney was power—power to possess
honour and luxury and wisdom of
rld. It was the sign of the sub-
of all the pleasures of life. Mr.
did not despise education or learn-
e frequently wished that he had
ed more of both himself. Though
ned, he was, however, by no means
norant man, for, even amid the
s and calculations which ever
ed his busy and fertile brain, he

had picked up a good deal of general information, and was a shrewd observer of men and things, at least in their more obvious phases. He had also the good sense to hold his tongue on subjects of which he was ignorant. Now though Mr. Ross was a very worldly man, as I have abundantly shown, although he had no pretensions to piety or philanthropy (notwithstanding that he went to church every Sunday, and subscribed two or three hundred a year in charity), he was not a man with absolutely no heart. He loved his wife very dearly, so dearly as to forgive her all the mistakes she was constantly making, —mistakes which annoyed him quite as much as they did his daughters. Mrs. Ross, too, was very much attached to him in return. She thought him a very great man, and the very best husband in the world. Of all her children she was equally fond and proud, while of their ambition and her husband's she was well-nigh ignorant. The construction of her own mind rendered her quite incapable of comprehending it. In one sense she showed more real good-breeding than any

them. With the same homely courtesy she showed to a neighbour gossip, she could have welcomed a peeress of the realm. She was the only one of the family who was entirely unmoved by the splendour of Mr. Cornish. She was not contented with wealth as the means of procuring a large, handsome house, fine furniture, fine clothes, carriages, servants, or as affording her an opportunity for indulging a benevolent disposition. But with regard to the consequence, or position bestowed by riches, no philosopher on earth was ever more entirely indifferent. But Mrs. Ross's indifference had nothing to do with philosophy, if philosophy implies reasoning and argument.

It was the result of a certain characteristically simple way of viewing things, which was attended with that unconsciousness which Carlyle has pronounced to be the truest symptom of health in every department of life. But to return to the party who were all now assembled. Mr. William Ross accosted Caroline with all his usual devoted politeness.

"I had the pleasure of seeing your

uncle, aunt, and cousins a day or two before I left the south country. In fact they were kind enough to invite me to a little musical party. A very pleasant snug little evening we had. We only required you and your sweet little Scotch songs to make it complete. As I knew, however, that I was so soon to have the pleasure of seeing you at Ardennan, I felt the privation the less. What a charming evening we had the last time I had the pleasure of meeting you at your uncle's, and kept up with such spirit!"

"A very pleasant evening," said Caroline, hardly able to repress a smile, as she remembered how very slight was the attention with which Mr. Ross had honoured her on that night, on which, to judge now from his tone and manner, one would have supposed her company had been his chief pleasure.

"Yes, it is now treasured up among my pleasures of memory, but — dinner. May I have the honour and happiness, Miss Irvine?" with an insinuating bow; then turning to his mother, "You must

ne, mamma, for not awaiting
mands."

t commands, my dear? Oh! you
out setting folk thegither to go
stair. For my part, I ne'er see
o' thae fiddle-faddles. Please
my good laddie. I'm sure you
please me better."

William's excessive politeness knew
ment during dinner. He chattered
ly, being always equally fine and
entary. When she could, Caroline
le was busy observing the party.
the Ardennan family and their
ere were the sons and daughters
e two of the neighbouring lairds.
ng men for the most part looked
nly and pleasant. The girls had
e air of being country-bred, and
hions were by no means of the
ate. Still they looked like ladies,
seemed secure in their position.
as visible in them none of that
and constraint which one could
d noticing in the fashionable, ac-
ed Miss Rosses, the elder of whom
striving to be interesting in the

eyes of Mr. Cornish, while the younger was chattering to a young gentleman who had just received an appointment in the East India Company's military service. Both were dressed in the height of the fashion, their dresses having arrived only the day before from a first-rate Edinburgh milliner. Their bracelets, chains, and hair ornaments, were likewise of the newest pattern. Altogether, they presented somewhat of a contrast to the homely highland lassies, with their old-fashioned silks and muslins, their best gowns for the last year, and which even in the beginning had owed all the fashion they ever possessed to the mantua-maker in the nearest town—about thirty miles off, northwards.

Mr. Ross's manner at the head of his table was quiet, self-possessed, and gentlemanly. Mrs. Ross's was hospitable. All the arguments of her son and daughters could not convince her that it was not etiquette to press her guests to eat, and that she ought to leave the task of attending to their wants to the servants. She kept continually calling out, "Mr. Cornish! I hope you've had salmon—Miss Gordon,

ave nothing on your plate—Miss my dear,—Willie, I hope you're ng to Miss Irvine. That's roast eorge has, and this is a very fine though I say it myself, for it's one own, and there's a bonnie hare, and oyster patties. Won't you be Miss Macpherson? Dear me! Mr. , some more champagne or some John; hand the champagne to Mr. ." Then, when the sweet course ts appearance: "This is a plum- g, and I would recommend ye all some o't before these other fal-de- dinna very well know what they t I made this puddin' myself. I make the plum-puddins. It minds he time when I used to make the -dumplings for our dinner on New day lang-syne, when I was young, ge and me was married. Ay, dear d I mind too there was a plum-pud- dinner for the folk at home on our g-day, for I pickit the raisins, and the currants for it the night afore." ar me, mamma!" cried Isabella, nervous laugh, "what a funny

whim of you; but," turning to her next neighbour, "mamma has such an extraordinary taste for cooking, quite like a German frau. When I was in Germany a year or two ago, there was a Countess von Carlberg, mother of a young lady with whom I formed a most intimate friendship, who had just the same taste. But it is quite the German fashion. Mamma would do excellently for Germany."

"Mamma's mind is so occupied with trifles, Mr. Cornish," said Maria, "she can never elevate her thoughts above sublunary trifles. She is one of those kind-hearted, housewifely people whom Frederika Bremer delights to paint. Have you read 'Nina'? It is the best of her works. I like that scene among the eternal snow."

Mr. Cornish only answered by a bow. He was looking supercilious, *ennuyé*, and absent. Caroline, who was seated opposite to him, fancied once or twice that a sort of troubled, wrathful expression gathered on his fine forehead, or flashed from his dark eyes; but it was only momentary, for his general air was merely that of calm hauteur.

Meanwhile, Mr. William Ross had been
ing to Caroline,—

amma is quite a character, Miss
; as a distinguished friend of mine,
ary character of high standing,
ed to me one day, ‘Your mother’s
ility is very refreshing.’”

a better taste than any of his
Mr. Ross took no notice either of
e’s attentions to her guests, or of
miniscences, but continued to con-
n the same tone, and on the same
to his neighbours, as before she
ken.

olm Gordon and Violet Smythe,
ere seated together alongside of
e, seemed too much absorbed in
ation to be aware of anything
did not immediately concern them.

Malcolm at least was supremely

He had been more than usually
d in his attention to Miss Smythe,
seemed to him that she had been
than usually gracious, more than
y lively and sweet; for at all times
s manner was lively rather than
sweet rather than warm. In this

respect she was the reverse of Caroline, whose liveliness, though not so constant as that of her friend, seemed ever the outpouring of a merry heart, as her kindness seemed that of an affectionate one. But Violet had lived, nay, had been entirely brought up in the world; her manners were therefore more conventional than those of Caroline; moreover, at twenty-five, and educated as she had been, it would hardly have been natural for her to possess the same child-like simplicity and ardent freshness which distinguished the country girl of seventeen. Such characteristics can hardly be preserved much beyond the season of childhood; for though society is by no means a scene of unmitigated selfishness and deceit, still there is so much of both to be met with, that one can hardly preserve the fearless trust and enthusiastic confidence of early youth either in things or persons (those which are untried of course I mean) for many years after one's entrance on the busy stage of social life.

After dinner, ere the gentlemen had returned to the drawing-room, Maria Ross

herself beside Caroline, and began
"What a charming handsome man
ornish was, and how very aristocratic
." She sat with her eyes cast
upon her lap, as usual, and spoke
same tragic tone. "He is the
ion of the dream of a hero," she
d off by saying.

appearance he certainly is," replied
e.

! but I should think he was in
respect. My brother William says
amazingly intellectual; with such a
e music, and such a taste for art;
at he is the most fascinating of
ions."

can, indeed, be very agreeable,
s, I should think, a highly culti-
mind; but do not you think that
mes he seems a little haughty? and
I fancied once or twice, that he
neither amiable nor happy. He is
whose anger I should fear, and
allow, he is very fascinating."

e is gloomy. I like those grand
y Byronic sort of characters. I
Bruno in Miss Bremer's 'Neigh-

bours;' that is the sort of man I should like to marry. Should not you?"

Caroline considered for a minute or two, and then answered, "No, I think not. Such persons are certainly very interesting and imposing, just as a grand, gloomy abbey or cathedral, with dark frowning recesses, and long mysterious arcades is imposing or interesting; but I do not think I should care to live in an abbey any more than I should like to have a Bruno for a husband."

"What sort of husband should you like, then?"

Caroline laughed right merrily. She was half amused, half interested by this conversation. "Really," she replied, "I cannot quite decide at once; and to tell you the truth, I have not thought very much or very deeply about it.—Not," she added ingenuously, "that I mean to pretend I have never thought about it at all; but I do not think I have made up my mind, and probably never shall till I fall in love, that is, supposing I ever do fall in love."

"But Mr. Cornish is just the person

in love with, if not to make a husband; you cannot deny that?" "I do not deny it. I can easily see anybody falling in love with him, therefore we had better take care, as not all have him," said Caroline, with a merry glance and smile.

Maria was incapable of mirth. Her face deepened in solemnity as she looked, with a side glance of mysterious meaning, at Violet. "Don't you wonder that Violet, living so long in the same house with Mr. Cornish, did not fall in love with him? or rather, don't you think it probable?"

"Probable! do you think so? Is there any appearance of it?" cried Caroline, looking really interested, principally on account of her beautiful friend, but not because she had never had anything to do with a love affair, either at first-hand or second-hand; and it seemed to her that Violet was delightfully new, romantic, and altogether likely to be, even in the remotest connection, connected with a *real* affair of the kind. To love and to be beloved had hitherto seemed to Caroline as a

dim and beautiful thing, far off in some shadowy future, like that time fairer than all the present or the past, when she should have succeeded in painting some glorious landscape. Caroline *knew* not yet, though, of course, she had heard it, and in a sense, perhaps, believed it, that—

“ 'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view,”

and that in our individual life, as in the life of our human nature, “The thing which hath been is that which shall be;” and that hopes and fears, and wishes, successes, disappointments, and hopes again, will make up its sum to the end. Nor, strange as it may seem, had she, in her ignorance and simplicity, ever thought of Malcolm and Violet as lovers. Probably this may appear surprising to some boarding-school Miss, who may chance to glance her eye over these pages, but in excuse for my young heroine’s deplorable want of penetration, I may mention, that though she did confess to thinking sometimes of love and marriage, which, perhaps, the boarding-school young lady would not have confessed, she was

ted in too many other subjects to made this one her sole study; and had had no practice, she was not sistant in the outward signs and oms of an incipient *affaire du cœur*. ver, Caroline did not consider men in the light of lovers, nor did she that a conversation between two s of opposite sexes must necessarily irtation. She viewed men as com- s, as fellow-creatures. I do not hat she had reasoned about it, or phically come to this conclusion; e instinctively felt thus, and acted her feelings. It had never struck at Malcolm's regard for Violet was at in kind from her own; not that d ever thought on the subject as a of speculation at all. She had , and unconsciously to herself, as- so.

Maria gave the interesting hint Mr. Cornish, she glanced across om to where Violet was seated in e easy chair, of the most luxurious and the most elaborate workman- The ample and flowing folds of

her snow-white dress contrasted well with the rich crimson drapery of the chair, while it accorded with the spotless purity of the neck and arms it partly displayed, partly concealed. Her head was slightly bent back, her pale gold ringlets falling round her face and neck like a shower of autumn sunshine, while all her features were motionless, and her blue eyes fixed as if in thought.

Caroline had never before seen her so silent and abstracted, for Violet was generally the gayest of the party in her own playful refined style. She began to wonder if there could be any truth in Maria's suggestion. To her exclamations Maria had only replied by something between a sigh and a groan, which might have been construed to mean anything the listener chose.

"Have you any ground for thinking so?" asked Caroline.

"None for thinking that he loves her. On the contrary, he does not admire her at all. His taste is quite in favour of a different style of beauty, — magnificent eastern forms, deep dark eyes, houri-like

y." And, at each epithet, the
er's voice became more tragic.

What do you think, then? Surely
cannot mean—"

only suspect; but do not breathe a
of what I am about to communicate,
which I would not, for the world and
contains, have mentioned to any
in whom I had not implicit confi-

" Maria drew a long breath, and
up to the ceiling for a moment,
ast her eyes determinedly down again.
oline was all attention, expecting
ar something like a chapter in a
ce.

olet used to be very intimate with
ornishes, and after she left school
with them some years at Harbury,
gnificant country seat, which has
ed to the family for centuries.
ne first three or four years of her
n in those ancestral halls, one of
tately houses of England,' as Mrs.
as beautifully calls them, Mr.
h was absent, making a tour of
e, not to mention Egypt, the land
Pharaohs, the shepherd kings, and

the mighty pyramids, as well as Palestine, Idumea, and Asia Minor. After he returned home, he wrote a book, delightful, poetical,—I dare say you have read it.”

Caroline had not read it ; she had heard of it, however. She was anxious that Maria, whose style was somewhat digressive, should go on with her narrative.

“As I was saying,” the latter continued, “he came to seek repose amid the paternal shades of Harbury ; and would you believe it ?” whispering solemnly, “he had not been there nearly a year, when Violet quitted that distinguished circle, and has never rejoined it since. Now, what do you say to that, my dear Miss Irvine ?”

“Is that all ?” cried Caroline.

“All !” and Maria shook her head mysteriously.

Caroline’s politeness alone restrained her from laughing at what appeared to her so much ado about nothing. She was mightily amused, too, at the disappointment of her own high-wrought expectations. To give a new turn to the conversation, she inquired how Miss Ross liked Miss Bremer’s “Neighbours,” which

published in England not long
his was the signal for the com-
t of some literary small talk.

found Maria a much more in-
companion than her airs and
had led her to expect. She
an immense quantity of novels
poetry, which, though hardly
as the sole mental diet, is
er than having read nothing
always renders a person much
panionable. Thus, though by
a sensible companion, she was
pid one, and discussed many
f romance and poetry both
st and feeling, though always
gerated manner. Unlike Caro-
ad a preference for what was
high-flown, both in sentiment
nt, over what was more simple
l. Not, however, that she ever
nat was positively false or bad.
a very exalted idea of her own
ity, as she composed verses,
looked up to by all her own
quite a genius. Being, as she
a genius and a poetess, she

thought it necessary to be different from other people. Hence her tragic airs, which were by no means what many supposed, conscious and wilful affectation: in a great measure, at least, they originated in self-deception. She really believed herself to be, in her own words, "one who had a destiny." She rejoiced much in her dark eyes, luxuriant hair, and musical voice, all so befitting a heroine. She had heard of Caroline as a clever girl, and as Miss Ross was a great admirer of talents, she had determined to cultivate her acquaintance. She was also genteel, and Miss Ross partook of the family taste for gentility, though she pretended, and partly believed, she did not. "The aristocracy of mind," she said, "was the only aristocracy which had any claim upon her admiration or reverence." A great mistake, however, on her part, as very few people in this world had a greater reverence for wealth and station than Maria Ross. She had, at one time, tried to strike up a friendship with Violet Smythe, but it would not do at all. Violet could not see any-

affectation in Maria, and could
e her at all, for Violet was
e persons who take no pains
te where they do not like.
a woman endowed with very
ngs, and not deficient in ability ;
d not possess much discrimi-
the nicer shades of character ;
nevolence, though extended to
sical woes of mankind, was by
so wide in its range towards
s and follies. She was also apt
those prejudices, styled likings
gs, and to Maria she had early
a aversion. Malcolm and Caro-
e ' contrary, she liked, though
means thoroughly appreciated
one or the other. She made
emonstration, however, either
rd or her dislike ; for, except
feelings were very violent,
was not a demonstrative one.
Violet's manners were much
lated than her feelings.

ish was one of the last of the
to return to the drawing-room.
ad been commenced for some

time when he made his appearance. He had now, however, thrown off his haughty and apathetic air; and approaching Caroline, accosted her in his most agreeable manner, inviting her to dance. "You would not dance with me the last time I had the pleasure of meeting you, Miss Irvine; I am determined to persuade you to-night. I will even attempt a Scotch reel, if you will not, in mercy, choose something else. Do you waltz?" No; Caroline did not waltz. "A quadrille, then?" Caroline would be very happy, and they joined the set then forming.

During the intervals in dancing, Mr. Cornish continued to be attractive and lively. He began by asking Caroline how she liked the highlands?

"I am delighted. The scenery is charming; I could never become weary of it; and the people are so hospitable—so very hospitable."

The faintest of smiles just curled the proud, full, chiselled lip of Arthur Cornish, as he answered, "Hospitable! I dare say they are; but hospitality is the virtue of savages."

rather say that inhospitality is the
of civilisation," cried Caroline.

I shall say whichever you please, as
seem to me to mean much the same

Depend upon it, it is a rule; and
give you an example, grammar-book
and, these people are so hospitable
only because they are in a semi-
civilised state."

semi-barbarous! I must say," cried
she, laughing, yet somewhat indig-
nant, "you are very audacious to speak
of your country-people in my presence."

Are your country-people? I beg your
pardon, but they are no more your coun-
try-people than they are mine. They are
Saxons, and you are a Saxon."

You have managed to get off very
well, I must say; but, you must re-
member the Rosses are Saxons as well
as I."

Heaven knows what they are! *par-*
don me—let me whisper it—vulgarians.
I am sure, cannot think otherwise."

As far as I have been able to judge,
the Ross seems to me to be a gentleman,
and the rest are very kind," said Caroline,

who rather liked the Rosses, and felt that it was almost treacherous to repay the kindness of her hospitable entertainers by abusing and laughing at them.

"You are cautious, I see; you have the national—virtue, shall we call it?—strongly developed."

"No, it is not caution; but I think, though the Rosses may be a little—a little, you know what I mean—they are very good-hearted and amiable; and, therefore, not vulgar in the full sense of the term."

"You give a very wide sense to the term," he said, laughing.

Caroline laughed too, saying, "So, you really think you are in a party composed of savages and vulgarians?"

"It is very cruel in you, Miss Irvine, thus to try to bring me into the palace of truth. Perhaps I had better remain on the outside, and say that I think the party composed entirely of the most polished and courtly of the race."

"But I am sure you cannot think all savage or vulgar. There are Mr. Gordon and Miss Smythe."

Gordon! oh, certainly; your believe?"

are not related. His sister to my half-brother;" and Caroline said that if he knew Catherine, certainly include her among the

not related to you? There is that blood which in Scotland is so much thicker than water in you?"

But he is my friend. I think the best, most intelligent, most I ever met."

highly honoured; and, having, does not require mine."

As, in the inflection of Mr. Cornish's, in the shade of something sneering; but as Caroline looked at his manner was so full of devotion and earnestness that she thought she must be mistaken.

"Miss Smythe," she added; "I am just admiring her. No one could be so beautiful, more refined, more graceful in manner and appearance."

Her voice was cold, and unnatural, and un-

interesting. I regard her in the light of a beautiful marble statue—very fine to be looked at.” There was a sort of bitterness in his tone as he spoke.

“ I find Miss Smythe quite the reverse of this ; she is so amiable, so pleasant.”

“ Perhaps she is amiable and pleasant ; but she is the most unfeeling woman I ever knew. I allow you the surface is all flowers and smiles ; but there is no warmth beneath. Do not give her too much of your affectionate heart, for you will receive nothing in return but chilling sweetness.”

Chilling sweetness ! Caroline felt at the moment, with a kind of disappointment and apprehension, that the epithet did not seem altogether inappropriate, nor the idea quite new to her ; though she had never before been conscious of it. There are often floating in the mind dim, instinctive, unacknowledged notions, of the existence of which we only become aware when we hear them expressed by another. She said gaily, however, “ You seem dissatisfied with everybody.”

“ Not with *everybody*, Miss Irvine ; you,

I am sure, cannot think so. I should be grieved, mortified if you did."

Caroline blushed slightly, and laughed not quite naturally. She was too young and unpractised either to affect not to know what he meant, or to make a proper reply. She was pleased with the compliment, however, for she was too artless and unsuspicious to be in the habit of thinking people did not mean what they said, particularly when they said anything so pleasant to be believed as Mr. Cornish had just done. She would have been greatly amazed, and not a little mortified, had she known that he had described her to his next partner, Maria Ross, in a slighting tone of voice, as "a prettyish little simpleton." But, in truth, he really liked her, and was amused by her. He liked her so much, and believed her to be so really what she appeared, that he had some momentary compunctious feelings about making love to her as an amusement while he was in the highlands. But he soon got over them. Arthur Cornish could never resist any temptation to amuse himself, or, indeed, gratify himself in any

way; being, in every respect, thoroughly selfish. Moreover, he felt that it was a great condescension on his part to honour with any attention a little country girl like Caroline, and that the *éclat* it would bestow upon her was quite a sufficient atonement for any pain it might cause her.

Malcolm and Caroline discussed the party as they drove home together. They had both enjoyed it exceedingly. Malcolm was delighted to have met so many of the old families once more.

“To be sure, they were nearly all boys and girls when I went away; and in truth they are hardly more yet; but they have the old names and the old welcome still. I feel, Caroline, exactly as if I had renewed my connection with dear relations. I felt what I have never felt since I left the strath, that I was in truly congenial society,—really among my own people.”

“Congenial! are they very clever, intellectual people, then? I should not have supposed it.”

Malcolm laughed, but felt inwardly pleased at the compliment unconsciously implied by his young companion. Her

single-mindedness charmed him more and more.

“My satirical young friend,” he answered, in that tone which always puzzled poor Caroline so much, because she never knew whether it was meant for jest or earnest; and no wonder, as it was probably meant for both,—“there is a congeniality of heart as well as of mind. I am sure a romantic, poetical young lady like you must know that.”

“I am not your satirical young friend. How am I satirical?”

“I shall convict you, Carry. There was a great deal of covert satire in your allusion to the intellectual shortcomings of my congenial friends.”

“Satire! I can assure you I said exactly what I thought; I had no intention to be satirical. I don’t think I like satire or satirical people; they are generally unamiable, though they may be amusing. I cannot bear ‘the coarse reality derision loves.’”

“Well, then, if you will not allow that you are my satirical young friend, you cannot deny that you are a romantic and

poetical young lady ; therefore I have no doubt you can understand that there is a congeniality produced by the same associations, the same early life in the same narrow circle, and the same love for home and fatherland. The spirit of clanship is not altogether a bad spirit. Doubtless it is incompatible with a very advanced state of civilization ; but there is much kindness in it. Carlyle, you know, or more probably you do not know, says : ‘ Whatsoever has existed has had its value.’ After all, however, Caroline, I fear truth must compel me to admit that there is no philosophy in my motives. I merely obey the feelings (call them not prejudices), implanted in me by birth and education. I have no doubt whatever that there are numbers of communities as enlightened, as virtuous, as amiable, as the community of Strath——. I have no strong, individual friendship with any member of it ; and yet, as a whole, I feel a regard for it, —a sympathy with it, such as I can never feel towards any other,—a regard sufficiently irrational to charm the most poetical mind. When I am far, far away, over

the Great Indian Ocean, walking, may be, in my *compound* near Calcutta, I shall often think of this night at Ardenнан, and of our drive home and our conversation, long after you have forgotten it, Carry, I dare say. But do you hear the owl?"

Caroline made no reply; but she leaned out of the carriage, which was an open one, with a cover.

It was a beautiful autumn night. Countless myriads of stars shone brightly in the midnight sky. The outline of the mountains was traced in darkness against the starlit dome. The wide valley lay in a soft, mysterious stillness, that was neither darkness nor light. All objects seemed hushed in a dewy repose, while the low rush of distant waters sang the lullaby of Nature. While on one side of the road lay the open strath, the other was bounded by a wood, which, underneath the starlit sky, looked preternaturally dark and gloomy. Ever and anon, the stirring of the still leaves, as by some slow breeze, betrayed the soft and otherwise noiseless flight of the owl; while a pale

shape, like a little white cloud, might be seen flitting among the branches, or a pair of great eyes would suddenly look out from the darkness. Caroline somehow felt ready to weep. She was vexed that Malcolm should think she would forget this drive so easily. She had been very happy in his society, and had never realised till this instant to her feelings that ere long this happy visit to the highlands would be over, and that long before there was any likelihood of her return, Malcolm would be back in Calcutta. It seemed to her that she should not care to return then to Locharroch. The highlands would be very dull without Malcolm.

She was recalled from the reverie into which she had fallen by Malcolm, in a merry tone, reverting to Mrs. Ross's speeches at dinner. He then spoke of the whole family so humorously, yet so kindly, that while Caroline smiled, she felt that they were all even more worthy of regard than she had hitherto imagined.

When silence again ensued, she leaned back, and watched each feathery branch as they passed, lighted up by the carriage-

lamps into a brilliant greenness; and as she watched, she instituted in her own mind a comparison between Malcolm Gordon and Arthur Cornish, the two most agreeable men she had ever met. She felt that while with the laughter of the one was ever mixed a degree of scorn and bitterness, that of the other was benevolence itself. She felt that however amusing and fascinating Mr. Cornish might be, in the society of Malcolm she was really happier. She had a delightful sense of safeness in Malcolm's company, which she could never feel in that of Mr. Cornish. She was not certain even that she did not think Malcolm quite as handsome as the latter. His figure, perhaps, was not quite so elegant, his features not quite so fine, his address not so insinuating, his eyes not so dark, and his voice not so melodious; but his bearing was more frank and open, his glance more merry, his smile more kind, his tones more cordial and more truthful, and his whole appearance full of a character at once more vigorous and more affectionate.

Caroline's meditations were only inter-

rupted by the stopping of the carriage before the door of Locharroch.

The reader has doubtless guessed already that the momentary concern felt by Mr. Cornish at Caroline's probable loss of peace of mind, was, as far as that gentleman's proceedings were concerned, quite a piece of unnecessary philanthropy.

CHAPTER XI.

now late in the autumn. The bloom had faded from the mountains. The ferns were brown and brown; the leaves of the mountain oak were faded and scattered, and even the green of the mountain oak was losing its brilliancy. The morning was cold and grey; mists shrouded the valleys, and all nature in one pale, vapoury atmosphere. Sometimes the sun about noon-day made a faint attempt to break out, but was quenched anon by the condensation of the clouds. Occasionally, however, it was victorious. The vapours were more dense even in the day time, and could shine forth with all that

clear and spiritual brilliancy which it possesses more in autumn than in any other season. It was beautiful to see the mist roll away in clouds and waves, clinging to the mountains in all sorts of fantastic forms and shapes; or, more beautiful still to see it rise like a curtain, and display the whole majestic scene of rock, and river, and mountain glittering in the dewy sunshine. Then there was often a gloomy grandeur,—a cold sublime, in the evenings of those days. As the chill twilight crept stealthily on, the hills would assume their darkest hue,—a deep, inky blue, while huge cloudy masses would settle on their summits, and pour down in torrents into the hollows. The dark loch reflected the yet darker pines, and no sound save the sough of the wind among the trees, disturbed the stillness, or marred the sense of solitude which was one of the chief charms of the scene.

Melancholy as were these evenings, and blithe though Caroline's disposition naturally was, she yet loved them as well as brighter ones; and she would sometimes walk till it was dark, admiring the

mournful tints, the vague, mysterious shapes, and the sad and solemn majesty which formed the spirit of the scene. On one evening of this description, when Violet Smythe had been spending the day at Locharroch, Caroline induced her to wrap herself in her plaid, and to accompany her in her favourite walk by the shore of the loch, and down a path by the river side. But she could not persuade Violet to admire the evening. To her it was only "cold, and dark, and disagreeable."

"I am not a genius, you see, Carry. I admire the scenery here on a fine day, certainly; but I see no beauty in it on an evening like this."

"But one may admire it though one is not a genius. I am sure, if you are not a genius, neither am I."

"Mr. Malcolm says you are; at least, that you will be one day, he thinks."

"Does he?" cried Caroline, and her eye brightened for a moment; "I fancied that Malcolm thought me a child."

"So he does; but a child of genius."

Caroline could hardly refrain from sighing.

"Tell me something about Italy, Violet," she said; for she was never weary of hearing of foreign countries, more especially of that country, so beautiful and so famous. It always seemed to her, too, to bring her much more nearly in contact with any place or scene, to hear it described by an eye-witness, than merely to read of it, while her vivid imagination generally enabled her to form pictures out of a description, however imperfect it might be.

"Tell you a story, little girl?" and Violet complied.

"Ah! Violet," cried Caroline, at last, "how I wish I were you!"

"Me! how I wish I were you, Caroline. You have a father, a home, many near and dear relatives; and what have I but money?"

"Oh! I did not quite mean to complain. I know, indeed, I have much to be thankful for in a dear papa and sister, and I am very happy. But you may go and wander as you please in those beautiful lands, which perhaps I may never see. You are beautiful, and ad-

mired, and charming,—and,—and,—other things.”

“And you fancied I was perfectly happy? Ah! Carry, ‘the heart knoweth its own bitterness.’”

And as Violet spoke she pressed her hand upon her heart, and an expression of pain passed over her countenance. Caroline was so much surprised that she scarce knew what to say. And yet she had never loved Violet so well,—never felt so deeply interested in her as at this moment. The “chilling sweetness” of which Mr. Cornish had spoken, and of which the remembrance frequently recurred to her as of an epithet disagreeably descriptive, had now entirely vanished. She was silent, however, and only testified her concern by a face of puzzled sympathy. But quickly the disturbed, pained look, whatever might have been its cause, passed, and Violet’s ordinary serenity returned. Caroline took her hand, and said warmly:

“I am sorry, dearest Violet, if I said anything to hurt you.”

“You, my dear girl! do not think so.

Your society is one of the greatest pleasures I have had for a long time."

Caroline felt much gratified, for Violet was not much in the habit of making professions. She had never heard her say so much to any one before. They walked on in silence for a few minutes, which was at last broken by Violet.

"Caroline," she said, "I wish you were older than I am, instead of so much younger; and then you could give me some advice."

"Older, Violet!" cried Caroline, a little vexed. "You and Malcolm always speak as if you thought me a child."

"You are not a child in understanding, Caroline. Although, perhaps, you may not be quite so accomplished as I am," Violet said, with a slight sneer. "I know you are both cleverer and better educated; but my dear Caroline, you *are* a child in experience of life and knowledge of the world; and therefore you cannot give me the counsel I want."

"Perhaps not. Indeed I am not qualified to give you advice,—except that we might take counsel together. But I could

give you sympathy, Violet; not that I mean to press your confidence," she added, quickly,—for Caroline had a touch of pride in her character; "but I only mean if you should wish to give it to me, you would not find it misplaced. Perhaps I am young and inexperienced; but I love you dearly Violet,—and you would find me a true friend."

"That I am sure I should," cried Violet, with a warmth quite foreign to her usual manner, and throwing her arms round her young companion, she pressed her close to her heart; "it is not want of confidence in you, my dearest. It is—it is—but another time, perhaps. Caroline, do you think anybody guesses that I am not happy?"

"No one, I think; but, dearest Violet, it grieves me to hear you say you are not. Are you sure you are not in low spirits to-night?"

"Low spirits!" she said, with a sort of laugh, painful to listen to, and hastily dashing from her eye one large drop which had risen there.

Caroline said no more. She was at once

distressed and interested. Sorrow she had seen in the houses of the poor ; but it was the first time she had witnessed, in the person of one endowed with every worldly gift, the presence of that worst of sorrows,—distress of mind. It seemed to bring it nearer to her. And yet hers were strange mixed feelings,—for although concern for Violet predominated over every other, there was also something mournfully romantic, and mysteriously fascinating in this half-confidence, given too under circumstances so congenial. The gathering shades, the dark, cloud-capped mountains, the cold grey river, the night-wind among the pines, and poor Violet's painful secret, seemed all to the imagination of this fanciful young girl, like the opening chapter in a romance of real life. She recollected what Maria Ross had said, or rather hinted, about an attachment, on Violet's part, to Mr. Cornish,—and began to wonder if there could be any truth in the surmise. But when she recalled the perfect indifference of Violet's manner towards him, and the way in which he had spoken of her, she rejected the idea, and began once

more to puzzle over the mystery. As they pursued their walk in silence, Caroline felt so much depressed that she could have wept; and yet her melancholy was, in a measure, of that not displeasing kind which we experience during the perusal of some tale,—at once sad and beautiful. Caroline knew too little of real misery to be able on so slight a hint as she had received, to bring it home to those deeper feelings which admit of no “joy in grief.” She was yet musing, as I have described, when her companion startled her by asking, suddenly, and almost in her usual tone of *gay nonchalance*,—

“Come now, Carry, and enliven me a little by describing the sort of man you would like for a husband.”

“How strange you are, Violet! That is exactly what Maria Ross asked me one night, and I told her I did not know.”

“Ah! but you shall not tell *me* that you do not know.”

“But really, Violet!”

“In the first place,—come, Carry!”

“Well, in the first place, then, he

must be thoroughly well-principled,—that is, all his actions must be governed by a desire to please God rather than to indulge himself. He must have a kind heart and a manly spirit, an intelligent mind and a pleasant temper. He must be a person to whom I should look up with reverence, and yet without a shadow of dread ;—one whose power I should feel, and yet in whose goodness I should have perfect trust,—one who would have perfect trust in me, and who would think my faults were only my faults, and not offences against him in particular,—and yet one who could help me to cure them, and become better and wiser every day of my life.”

Violet was grave as she asked, when Caroline concluded this speech, in a tone which had become almost enthusiastic,—“ Were you ever in love, Caroline ? ”

“ I ! ” cried the young girl, blushing,—“ no Violet—never.”

“ I thought, perhaps, you were describing some person ; but I see I was wrong. And indeed I never saw any one less like a love-sick damsel.”

Caroline was very thoughtful for a few minutes. Perhaps a new consciousness began to dawn upon her inexperienced, girlish heart. At last she inquired seriously, yet quietly,—

“And now, Violet, it is only fair that you should describe to me the sort of person you would like to marry.”

“But I—I cannot Caroline; because—because I do not know. The person—the sort of person you described would make an excellent husband; but—”

“But what, dear Violet?”

“If one could not love him, even recognizing his goodness—”

“One must love a person like that, I think.”

“One ought. One would be happy if one could. Oh, Caroline! But there is the tea-bell, and we so far from home. Let us have a truce to sentimentalising,—and a race to raise our spirits.”

And the light graceful Violet bounded away like a fawn. Caroline ran too; but her thoughts seemed to retard her. She seemed to hear Violet repeat,—“I thought you were describing some person.” Had

she indeed been doing so unconsciously? and had Violet guessed any one in particular? Or had the words of the latter pointed at any real person, when she said, that one ought to love such a person, and that one would be happy if one could? What did everything mean? What did her own feelings mean? Ah, Caroline! was a soft shadow indeed beginning to steal over the sunny morning of thy life?

As they hastened towards the house, they were met by Malcolm Gordon and Mr. William Ross, the latter having ridden over to dinner for the purpose of accompanying Violet home. Mr. Ross immediately placed himself beside Caroline, and began to talk of the scenery on the Upper Rhine, for he had discovered that Caroline was fond of scenery, and he belonged to that class of persons who are desirous of being universally agreeable, at the same time that they seem always possessed by the wish to impress others with a notion of their universal superiority. Thus Mr. William Ross, while he complimented Caroline upon her taste for the beauties of

nature,—assured her that if she had seen Switzerland she would think nothing of Scotland.

“You would never look at that wood there, Miss Irvine, if you had seen the Black Forest. How you would enjoy continental scenery, with your taste for the picturesque. Ah! when I think of those past days in that land of music and romance, it makes me, except under such happy circumstances as the present,” with a bow to Caroline, “feel somewhat *ennuyé* in this common work-a-day world.” And he looked as if it were a very fine thing, and the sign of a superior mind to be *ennuyé*, and as if his simple companion could not fail to be impressed with the distinction which having been in a “land of music and romance” had conferred upon him. He would doubtless have been not a little mortified had he known that the fair lady by his side was not thinking of him at all, had hardly even heard what he had said. As if by a sort of fascination, Caroline found her eyes attracted to Malcolm and Violet. She noticed now something peculiar in the air and manner of

the former. She noticed a sparkle in his blue eye as Violet addressed him in a lively, friendly tone, and then as her foot caught in a fallen twig, he offered her his arm, although they were only two or three minutes' walk from the house. There was something, it struck her, too, peculiar in his manner of offering it,—a sort of consciousness, and he certainly coloured, and there seemed a meaning in the words more than met the ear, as he said, "Rest on me, dear Miss Smythe." He spoke in a low tone, but Caroline heard him quite distinctly, and she began now to understand what it meant. But she could not understand Violet, and she could not understand herself. All the remainder of the evening Caroline was unusually silent and abstracted. She found Mr. Ross's conversation quite a nuisance, and tried to escape it as much as she could by playing a great deal on the piano. All the evening, too, she remarked that Malcolm and Violet seemed unusually friendly. They sat apart together on a sofa, and talked in a low tone. Locharroch was at

his everlasting *Times*, while Catherine, busily engaged with her work, took no notice of anything that was going on. She did not like Mr. Ross, and therefore she left him to Caroline, and yet she was constantly pressing him to ride over with Miss Smythe. Caroline's eyes seemed to have been suddenly enlightened. This night appeared to form a new era in her life.

Caroline accompanied Violet out of the room to prepare for her moonlight ride to Ardenнан. As soon as the latter was fully equipped, and while they were yet alone, she embraced her young friend, and kissed her with unusual warmth.

"Caroline, dear," she said, "forget all the nonsense I talked to-night. I should be a wicked creature if I were really miserable. And, Caroline, I think that with such a husband as you described, one not only *ought*, but one *must* be very happy."

When they went down-stairs, Malcolm was waiting in the hall. He took Violet's hand and assisted her to mount. As soon as she was gone, Caroline ran up to her

own room and sat down in the moonlight. She began to muse over all the strange events of the evening, and as she mused, a few tears slowly chased one another down her cheeks. And then she thought—“What a weak, foolish child I am! But I will not give way to this. Beautiful, charming, dear Violet, and kind, excellent Malcolm, I hope you will be very, very happy. And I shall be your friend all my life, and you will ask me to visit you, and some time or other I shall paint you a picture, and you will say when you look at it,—‘That is our little Carry’s doing.’ And I have dear, dear papa, and darling Agnes, and poor Violet has nobody.” And Caroline dried the few tears which rested on her cheeks, and ran down-stairs. She was somewhat surprised as she crossed the hall to perceive Malcolm yet standing at the door in precisely the same position in which she had left him. He started at the sound of her footsteps, and turned round. “Ah, dear Carry! it is you. Come out with me, and take a turn in the moonlight. You cannot think how the

clouds have all cleared away, and how bright the moon is shining. I know you are a romantic young lady."

As he spoke, he laid his hand kindly on her shoulder, and looked down at her with his usual kind glance, and faint, humorous smile. But it did not seem to-night quite so natural or spontaneous as usual. There was a slight consciousness in Malcolm's manner,—a slight appearance of wishing to divert attention from himself, as if he felt that perhaps he might as justly have been accused of being the romantic one. But Caroline was in no mood at this moment to retort the accusation. At his touch, at his glance, she experienced a new and strange sensation. Again she felt the tears ready to rush to her eyes, while there was a strange yearning at her heart. She wished she could have retreated again to her own room, but as he drew her hand within his arm, and led her out into the moonlight, she seemed under the influence of some spell which precluded resistance. Malcolm and Caroline were not so merry together as usual to-night. Perhaps they were influenced

by the solemn beauty of the night; or perhaps there might be some other cause for their silence. But whatever was the reason, certain it is they were more than usually thoughtful as they walked arm-in-arm by the shore of the moonlit loch, admiring the great dark mountains, and listening while the pine woods—

“Made a solemn music of the wind.”

Mr. Cornish was now no longer a guest at Ardennan. After having remained there for two or three weeks, he had gone to pay a visit at Maclaren Castle, the seat of Sir Robert Maclaren, an old-fashioned highland residence situated in a wild extensive park in the same county, but at the distance of about a dozen miles both from Locharroch and Ardennan. He had been here about a fortnight when somewhat to the surprise of his acquaintance he announced that he had taken Corriebeg, a small, but pretty shooting-box, off the hands of an English gentleman who wished to get rid of it, and that he intended to establish himself for the greater part of the winter in the highlands. He

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as not right. How unlike he

was to Malcolm Gordon! He was consistent only in the indifference, approaching dislike, which he seemed to feel for Violet Smythe. To Malcolm Gordon, too, he appeared to have an antipathy. Indeed, in this case, whatever it might be in the other (for the neutrality of Violet's manner afforded no room for a surmise) the dislike appeared to be mutual. The two young men, although necessarily thrown a good deal into one another's company, displayed no cordiality, but on the contrary a mutual avoidance and distrust, more especially Mr. Cornish. He was haughty and supercilious to Malcolm, who in his turn was cold and indifferent, and would not allow himself to be in the smallest degree affected by the slighting assumption of the other. Malcolm Gordon possessed a manly, unpretending dignity of character, which in the calmest and quietest manner could assert itself, and never failed to put down anything bordering on impertinence. He never spoke in angry or abusive terms of any one. He had never said to any one that he disliked Mr. Cornish; yet Caroline felt

with absolute conviction that he did dislike him.

Caroline took the first opportunity to say to Mr. Cornish, "I thought you did not like the life and the manners of the people here. I was quite surprised by what I heard you say to Mrs. Gordon a little while ago."

He laughed. "You are a severe disciplinarian, Miss Irvine, and call me to account for my misdemeanours in the most unmerciful manner. Do you not know, most unsophisticated nymph, that we of the world sacrifice a little to agreeableness and amusingness? We do not necessarily dislike people because we laugh at them by way of showing our wit, and we exaggerate, perhaps, a very little, the good opinion we really have when we think it will be agreeable in the society in which we find ourselves; so that what you seem to insinuate is insincerity, is, you see, in reality true philanthropy. You look unconvinced. Ah Caroline!" he added in a lower tone, though they were at some distance from the rest of the party, on the terrace in

front of Ardennan, "I only spoke the truth when I said I had found charming society here—freshness and originality, warmth and sincerity." As he spoke he looked at her meaningly with his magnificent dark eyes. Caroline blushed crimson; but her heart did not beat as it had done that moonlight night in the hall at Locharroch, beneath the glance of Malcolm Gordon.

She said, "Do you expect much sport during the winter months?"

He looked at her to see if she was coquetting. But no. Her manner was quiet and simple. "Confound the girl!" he thought, "half the women in London would have been out of their wits with delight, and this little wild, unformed chit stands as composed and unmoved as if she were a princess. One can get no fun out of these stupid Scotch people." But he said, aloud in a tone of haughty indifference, "Oh! I shall slaughter the wild ducks and widgeons, and there will soon be plenty of woodcocks. Then, when Loch Achquaigh is frozen, one may stalk the sea-fowl, or skate. Anything to kill the

time. I am sick of Harbury, and weary of London, and fatigued to death with my late agricultural experiment among the *toddy*-drinking professors of that primeval science. Anything for a change. You return very soon, I believe?" in a careless, supercilious tone. Caroline was a little mortified, a little shocked, and a little amused by this speech. But the wound to her vanity was not more than skin-deep, while it gave her a clearer insight into the character of Mr. Cornish than she had yet obtained.

She answered, imitating his carelessness of tone, "I have just obtained Papa's consent to remain till Christmas, in accordance with my brother's and sister's kind wish and my own. I am desirous to see these beautiful lakes and mountains when they are covered with snow, and I am unwilling to quit my many kind friends—among them Miss Smythe."

"Ah! you have a romantic attachment—an eternal friendship, I believe, is the phrase among young ladies—in that quarter."

"We have a sincere mutual regard,"

replied the young lady with spirit and dignity.

"Oh! that is the phrase now. I dare say Miss Smythe is too calm and sensible for eternal friendships. She is like a woman made of snow. I should advise you not to make too close advances, lest she should freeze your attachment to death."

"I can assure you," cried Caroline with her natural warmth and impetuosity, for she was yet too little experienced and artificial to maintain an indifferent exterior when she heard her friends unjustly aspersed, "you were quite mistaken in saying Miss Smythe was cold and unfeeling. I know now that her feelings are both deep and strong, and that you must take self-command for coldness."

"How! Why do you think so?" cried Mr. Cornish quickly, with a look of strange interest, and seemingly for the moment, quite thrown off his guard.

"I cannot tell you how," she answered much surprised, "but I have had proof of what I say."

"Oh! it does not signify," he answered

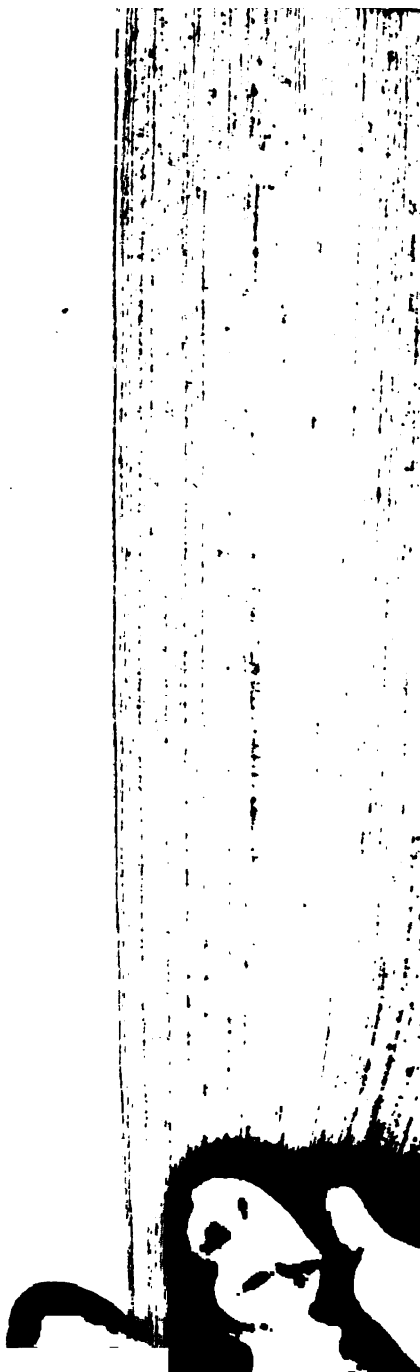
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Caroline was not convinced of
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Caroline and Mr. Cornish parted
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Caroline was sorry, for she
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essed neither birth, rank, nor
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the reader will perceive that



Caroline Irvine was acquiring wisdom — wisdom at least of the serpentine order. She had made great advances, in this her first flight from the paternal nest. Truly she was beginning to be quite learned in the ways of this wicked world.

CHAPTER XII.

time passed on, that which had dimly guessed for the first the moonlight night in the hall-roch, became more and more her. Malcolm and Violet were could not doubt. A day hardly which the latter did not ride Ardenнан, and Violet spent at least and frequently two or three, every ocharroch. She appeared to be Caroline than ever, read with and duets with her, and gave her ty and some costly presents ; but she bestow her confidence upon her had she given her one glimpse heart, or her heart's history. The above-mentioned was the first and

only time she had ever alluded to her own feelings. Once, indeed, upon another occasion, in speaking of the affectations of Maria Ross, she had remarked,—

“ When persons have really suffered, they don’t speak of their sufferings, or parade them to the world.” But nothing in her tone would have led any one to suppose that she alluded to herself. It was rather by indirect indications than by any positive allusion, that Caroline gathered any notion of her feelings and intentions. Thus she frequently seemed to assume that her home was to be in the Highlands, and would often talk as if, at some future time, Caroline would be visiting her there. Not that she ever invited her, she merely left it to be inferred from her way of speaking. She frequently, too, when they were alone together, spoke of Malcolm Gordon, and in terms of the highest praise, yet without once saying “ Caroline, he loves me,” or “ I love him.” And Caroline, from some cause or other, though she frequently intended it, could never bring herself to break the ice and say, “ Violet, I know all.” Yet Violet seemed to like to hear

him praised, and she encouraged Caroline to tell anecdotes illustrative of his worth, spirit, and intelligence; and, one way or another, Caroline had collected of these an abundant store. Miss Smythe seemed, too, to have become much more alive to the charms of mountain scenery, thought Lochan Achquaigh the prettiest sheet of water she had ever seen, and appeared to take an interest in the moral and physical welfare of the mountaineers, such as she had never shown before. Not that Violet had ever been deficient in a feeling of compassion for the poor, or in readiness to bestow all the relief money could afford. There was hardly any benevolent or charitable society to which she did not subscribe large sums; and you had only to tell her a tale of distress, and her purse and all its contents were instantly at your disposal. But now she talked of the difficulty of knowing how to do good, the possibility of doing harm with the best intentions, the efficacy of sympathy being greater than that of money, the great good to oneself in personally visiting the poor, the infusing of good principles being the

only method of doing permanent good.
“All reform must begin at the heart.”
Caroline had heard these opinions, or at least something like them before, and she guessed whence Violet derived her inspiration. Once too, Violet said to her,—

“Ah Caroline! to be beside people who are very good, makes us feel at once our own worthlessness, and yet as if one were in the sure way of becoming better and happier.” And Caroline knew what she meant, and murmured in her heart, —
“Happy, happy Violet!”

Occasionally, after such interviews, poor Caroline would feel quite low-spirited, and would withdraw to her own room to shed a few tears. Then the poor child would reproach herself for being selfish and jealous, and would work herself up to quite a heroic pitch of friendship and generosity. She would never marry, but be Malcolm's and Violet's dear friend for her life; and what a comfort it was to think that they both liked her!—for that she felt quite certain.

Meanwhile it seemed to be tacitly understood thing, both at Locharroch and

Ardennan, that Mr. Malcolm Gordon and Miss Smythe were to walk together, sit together, or dance together,—and they both appeared to acquiesce in the arrangement, without any difficulty, as if it were the only natural and proper one. Violet, though perhaps a shade more sweet and more gentle in Malcolm's company than in that of any other person, ever maintained her ordinary ease and composure, while the hints and jests of Mr. William Ross and the Miss Rosses, or even the pretty plain speaking of their mamma, failed to raise so much as a passing blush on her fair cheek. Malcolm, on the contrary, frequently coloured, and looked a little annoyed, or a little amused by these allusions, as the case might be; while his whole manner, the glance of his eye when he spoke to Violet, or when she addressed him, his utter inattention to everything and everybody else whenever she was speaking, all told a tale it was impossible to mistake. Poor Caroline! somehow or other she always happened to see those glances, so fond and so ardent, and the sight never failed to send a pang to her

little heart. Such a glance would never rest on her, never at least from eyes where she should wish to see it. At those moments life seemed to Caroline a vague and chilling dream, full of a sense of weariness, and pain, and disappointment. And yet it seemed too to contain a region of bliss, and joy, and sunshine; but she was shut out from it. Then she confessed to herself that she was a very foolish wicked girl, and that Malcolm Gordon, even had he not loved another, was far too good for her; for love, as true love ever does, had made her humble. Then it came into her mind like a consolation, that though she never could be loved by Malcolm Gordon, she would try to make herself more worthy of *having been* loved by him. "What a vain thoughtless girl she had been all her life!" Poor Caroline! *Her* young, innocent life!

Caroline inherited her mother's vigorous and healthy mental constitution. Moreover, she had not, like the latter, come in contact with the harsh realities of life. She viewed all things, and all events, through an enthusiastic medium. There was some-

thing even captivating to her imagination in the idea of loving unknown to any one, unguessed by himself, this hero of her heart; in cherishing for ever in her inmost thoughts this image of all that was good, and wise, and noble; and in the resolution to strive to become by its contemplation, better, and wiser, and nobler evermore. She felt that to sit down and mourn over her destiny would be unworthy of one who loved Malcolm Gordon. It was not what he himself would have approved or admired: it was not right. Such was Caroline Irvine's first awakening from the unconscious dream of childhood—such the beginning of her first conflict in the warfare of life; such were the thoughts and the aspirations with which, when she felt inclined to be miserable or desponding, or to compare her fate with what seemed to her the brighter lot of another, she was wont to comfort and encourage herself, till she succeeded in producing in her heart that sentiment of lofty devotion which ever brings with it its own reward.

Malcolm, meanwhile, occupied only in watching the symptoms which might serve

to indicate the state of one heart, and little guessing the interest he had created in another, was in a condition between anxiety and happiness. Day by day his hopes became stronger, and with them his love. But self-distrust and anxiety always increase in precisely the same ratio as this kind of affection, and the moment had never yet arrived in which he had found Violet Smythe sufficiently encouraging, to throw the die on the turn of which all his hopes depended. The present was so charming that he dreaded to change it unless for the absolute certainty of something better. Perhaps, too, the time thus spent might be the means of securing a more certain hold upon the affections of his beloved. In another, very probably, Malcolm might have condemned the course he was now pursuing as wanting in energy and moral courage, as an unwise trifling with his own happiness; or perchance he might have smiled at it, as I, and perhaps you, reader, are now doing, as another evidence of human inconsistency. But he, like you and I too perhaps, was not exempt from the ordinary follies and weaknesses of our

nature. Not that he was in an ordinary way deficient either in moral courage or energy of character : he was only in a novel situation, and under the pressure of extraordinary circumstances and feelings, acting somewhat inconsistently. And now methinks I hear some one exclaim, "Inconsistency !—I cannot endure inconsistency." But I crave your pardon while I ask,—Is inconsistency inconsistent with the nature even of the best, and wisest, and strongest among us ?

The winter set in early this season, and with unusual rigour. By the middle of November, the mountains were wrapped from top to bottom in a soft cold robe of dazzling white. Loch Achquaigh was one smooth sheet of snow-powdered ice ; and down the cold grey river was rapidly hurried large masses of rough ground-ice, called *grue* in our north land. The strong current, however, as yet refused to be bound by the iron hand of the frost. A party on the ice at Loch Achquaigh had for some days been in agitation among the young people at Ardenнан and Locharroch ; but by Malcolm's advice, it had been deferred for a

few days, in the hope that a longer continuance of the frost might render it more certainly safe. At last, however, the day was fixed; and in addition to skating, sliding, and walking upon the ice, the party were to have the advantage of witnessing a curling match, between the young men of the *toons* at Locharroch and Ardennan, which said *toons* consisted of some half-dozen houses each. But it is not uncommon to hear even a single house called a "toon" in the highlands. For the benefit of my English readers I may also explain that "curling" is a national game played on the ice by means of throwing large stones, sometimes almost the size of a man's head; and except that the scene and the missiles are different, somewhat resembles bowling in the way it is played.

The morning of the appointed day proved so fine that Malcolm and Caroline determined to walk over to Ardennan, where the whole party were to have luncheon previous to their setting out on their projected expedition. During the previous night it had been a hoar-frost; but, though the mistiness had now cleared away, the trees,

and the stones, and the grass were yet encrusted with *rime*, as we still call the hoar-frost in Scotland, though I believe the word is now nearly obsolete in England. It was four miles to Ardenнан, and almost immediately after breakfast, Malcolm and Caroline set out on their ramble. It was one of those bright, bracing winter days, when one feels one's body almost as light as a bird's, and one's spirits, if possible, lighter still. It was very cold, and yet so calm that one was quite unconscious how cold it was. The sky was of a clear sharp blue, cold even in its brightness. Cold and white rose the snowy mountains from the cold white snowy plains. Long icicles hung from the rocks, showing in the sunlight like innumerable prisms. A frost-work as of wrought silver set with diamonds encrusted every tree, and bush, and stone; nay, every tiny twig and meanest weed. It was like walking through a land of the genii, glittering with precious jewels. The snow was not deep, and so dry and crisp, that it crackled beneath the light tread of our young pedestrians. Malcolm was in uncommonly gay spirits. He talked

and laughed, and made fun with Caroline all the way to Ardennan; and of a merry nature herself, she caught the spirit of her companion, and when they reached the termination of her walk, her cheeks were glowing brightly, and her clear brown eyes glancing with mirth and exercise.

"You are a merry lassie, Caroline," said Malcolm; "and a bonnie lassie, too! What would an Indian belle give for such roses as those now blooming in your cheeks?"

The roses, of course, grew brighter at this speech, and Caroline answered, laughing, "You don't treat me with proper respect, Malcolm; indeed you do not."

On entering, they found all the Ardennan party fully equipped, and luncheon ready. Mr. Cornish, too, was there, having ridden over from Corriebeg. He was looking uncommonly handsome, and seemed to devote himself still more assiduously than usual to Maria Ross. He was seated beside her at luncheon, and they talked together in low tones. Maria looked less tragic, less solemn than formerly. Her eyes were still cast down, but less with affectation than with real

while she frequently blushed, her
trembled, and she eat nothing,—
e noticeable as she had before had
rkably good appetite; and yet
feelings were not, at least at
so entirely absorbed by love that
as no room for vanity; for two or
mes she cast side-glances of tri-
Violet and Caroline, which seemed
“See what a heroine I am, and
hero I have got! Behold, and
Poor Maria! Whatever Mr.
had been saying to her, as they
out together towards Loch Ach-
apart from the rest of the party,
ned to tread on air. Her heart
of passion, and her head well-
rned with the idea of being a
s lady, and the wife of a man
ght have been the hero of any
that ever was written, as regarded
ersonal and mental qualifications.
ions of future greatness floated
er mind’s eye; she seemed to see
he mistress of a stately establish-
uch as she had read of in poetry,
ded by all the pomps and honours

of an ancient family, pomps and honours which she felt her father's *parvenu* wealth could never purchase, and which, in her imagination, were invested with a poetic as well as a worldly interest. She saw herself now at Harbury, now in London, the centre of a brilliant circle, the admired and envied of all beholders. And then the Buchanans, and the Wilsons, her old school companions and favourite cronies, what would they think, as they read in the *Morning Post* of her presentation at court by a duchess or countess, together with a description of her dress, feathers and diamonds, and all? In short, Alnaschar never built a more brilliant castle in the air than did Maria Ross on that cold sunny morning, as she walked by the side of Arthur Cornish beneath the snowy highland mountains. Hers, it is true, was somewhat more vague than that of her famous predecessor in aerial architecture; but she believed not less firmly in the workmanship of her fancy, and the reader must concede that she was not without some excuse for believing that the fabric of her vision was not entirely baseless. Caroline,

...ile, had been committed to the mercies of Mr. William Ross and her Isabella, who nearly chattered and goggled her to death, and yet they with so imperturbably good-natured was impossible to be angry with ally, or aught else than amused r vanity. They, too, were evi- uplifted. Mr. William, spoke of h" being a "capital fellow." "I may take a run to Harbury in or April; sure of meeting good there, Miss Irvine, and that is like. I have an innate horror rity, and have hitherto been most e in meeting with associates of a and lofty turn of mind. There is nd Cornish, for example, and Isa- ou, I dare say, remember my poor Alphonse de Vervier, whom I met s, and who was cut off by an y fate. Alphonse was a splendid r at least would have been; and ow men of genius have a much standing in society among our neighbours than in our mammon- ping, tuft-hunting country. Poor

Alphonse! what an eye he had! like a poet's 'in fine frenzy rolling.' You have no idea of such a man here. Arthur Cornish does perhaps give you some idea of his *physique*; but his mind! Ah, Miss Irvine, how *you* would have appreciated him, and how he would have delighted to encourage your fine taste for art!"

"I remember," cried Isabella, "that Christiana Buchanan fell quite in love with your description of him, and Helen Wilson was dying to see him. They were both expiring to go abroad, and after the account we gave them of the charming promenades and gardens, took quite a horror at Buchanan-street. Such a flirtation you and Helen had that night, Willie!"

"A flirtation? Ah, I dare say I had something of the kind. Helen is a pretty girl, with a good foot and ankle; but don't judge of me, Miss Irvine, by Isabella's account; she would make you believe I am a terrible fellow; but I can assure you I am the most harmless and inoffensive creature in existence. I never flirt, Miss Irvine."

Mr. Ross said all this with an air at

once of devotion to Caroline, and supreme satisfaction with himself. His look seemed to say, "You find me fascinating—don't you?"

"*You* never flirt!" cried Isabella; "I know better, and so does Miss Irvine, I am sure. You are a sad flirt, so don't deny it, for we won't believe you. I am sure you flirted with Miss Irvine's cousin, at Wetherstone; for you told me she was such a handsome girl. Now, didn't he?—didn't he, Miss Irvine?"

Caroline "thought he did;" whereupon Miss Isabella exclaimed triumphantly, while her brother declared he was excessively ill-used and slandered—looking, however, all the time more self-satisfied and enchanted than ever. He then offered to carry Caroline's muff and pocket-handkerchief, and to lead her by the hand, for they were now on the ice, and finally declared himself her "slave eternally." Heaving a sigh, he next began lackadaisically to refer to Wiesbaden and the Countess Ida, and dropped a mysterious hint about disappointed love. But to Caroline it seemed that he was better satisfied with this unhappy attachment to

a countess than if it had been a prosperous suit to any untitled maiden. In fact, as he alluded to this melancholy passage in his life, he looked most sentimentally happy, and a faint smile of self-gratulation seemed to play round his mouth, as he hinted at "his blighted hopes, cruel father, and an engagement contracted in the cradle according to the fashion of the German nobility." "Persons must pay a tax for noble blood, you see, Miss Irvine," he said, with another sigh, and as if he had made a profound moral reflection.

While the rest of the party were occupied as I have already described, Malcolm and Violet had been walking together, apparently so completely absorbed with one another, that they had neither eyes nor ears for any of their companions; nor, even, it would seem, for the beauty of the winter landscape by which they were surrounded. Malcolm had offered his arm to Violet immediately on their quitting the house. She had accepted it promptly, and almost for the first time Malcolm thought he detected a blush on

her fair delicate cheek. There was certainly at least a look of consciousness, which made his heart beat, and almost took away his breath. He was much the more perturbed of the two. He felt that now his fate was on the brink of accomplishment, and yet at the instant various thoughts and feelings were strangely commingled with the one paramount thought and feeling. While an intense love, an agonizing anxiety filled his heart, there was present to his mind, rather as a series of spontaneous and subordinate mental impressions than voluntarily-summoned ideas, many of the scenes and the feelings of his past life. Again, after a long exile, among his native hills, many even of the most trivial incidents of childhood and youth seemed to come up before his memory with a wonderful vividness; his feelings on his father's death, his long mental struggle ere the pride of the Gordons yielded to the principle of the honest man—all were present to him now with so perfect a distinctness, that it seemed well-nigh impossible that so much of life should have passed since then. It

seemed strange that his whole inner man should be so different now, and yet that those days should appear so real and so recent. He had a curious feeling that he was at once the same and a different person. All the while that these phantasmagoria were passing before his mental vision, his heart and brain were busy balancing hopes and fears, encouragements and discouragements, asking and re-asking support from each other. At last Violet said,—

“What a charming winter day! How sunny and cheerful it is! I like winter, there is something so sensible about it. In summer I often think one can only feel and be lazy. In winter one can think and work.”

“But can one not *feel* in winter, too, Violet?” said Malcolm, his voice trembling perceptibly as he pronounced her Christian name; for it was the first time he had called her by it, while the tone altogether bespoke some anxiety for her answer.

“Certainly,” she answered, in a tone which indicated no displeasure, but rather gratification, though of too calm a cha-

racter to be altogether satisfactory to the ear of a lover, "one can feel at all seasons. Perhaps I expressed myself ill; but I meant to say that if the feelings which spring beneath summer skies and the summer-like influence of poetry and sentiment are more passionate and more absorbing than those conceived under the colder influence of wintry days and sober truth, they are less healthy, and, I believe, less likely to be lasting or practical. I am speaking from my own experience."

"Your experience is then unlike mine. My feelings are but slightly modified by such circumstances. Violet, wherever I had learned to know you, whether in the warm and glowing east, or in my wintry native north, I should have loved you the same, at once with passion and truth. Violet, may I show you my love by my life?"

As he spoke he laid his hand on hers, which rested on his arm, and pressed it lightly. She allowed him to press it and to hold it; but she returned no answer, and her eyes were fixed on the earth.

"Violet!" he reiterated, with some

vehemence, "my fate is in your heart. Will you not let me read it? Oh, do not trifle with me, Violet!"

And then she looked at him, and then she spoke. There was now a bright flush on her cheek, her blue eyes were bright and shining, like the sky above them, and her voice was full of energy, yet tremulous with feeling.

"Heaven knows I would not trifle with any man, least of all with you. You ask to read my heart, and you shall read it; but not at this moment, for this is neither the time nor the place; but to-morrow come to Ardennan, and you shall know my whole heart."

"But, Violet, tell me in the meantime, may I not call you *my* Violet?"

"If you wish, Malcolm."

"Oh, thanks! thanks! You do not reject me."

"No, Malcolm. I should not have acted as I have done lately had I not meant—had I not thought it for my own happiness, and that even such as I am I could make you happy."

"Such as you are, my best and dearest!"

and Malcolm pressed the hand he still held passionately to his bosom.

“Perhaps I ought to have said—such as my feelings are; but even as I am myself, and I speak from no affectation of humility, I am not worthy of you. I have the deepest sense of your goodness and truth. I shall commit my welfare to your keeping without a shadow of distrust in you, but I regret that I have not a character nearer yours, nor, to atone for my deficiencies, those first, fresh, and ardent feelings which you ought to have found in the woman you loved.”

As Violet spoke, her eyes filled with tears. She was no longer cold and unmoved, but showed both passion and earnestness. Malcolm, too, was deeply moved. He answered gravely, yet with heartfelt tenderness,—“You mean, my Violet, that you have loved another more fondly than you love me. Thanks, dearest, for your candour. Your confidence is not misplaced or unappreciated. It would have been too much happiness, perhaps, to be beloved as I love; but you love me well enough to marry me, and perhaps

you will love me better in time. I am content."

At last Violet returned the pressure of his hand. "Oh, Malcolm!" she said, "I wish that I deserved you better." They continued to walk on, but in silence. Malcolm's mind was in a strange whirl. He was at once disappointed and happy. His love for Violet was stronger than ever; nay, a more entire trust and admiration, a deeper shade of tenderness had been added to it. All that had perplexed him in her was now clear. As true, as tender, as noble, as he had ever pictured her, he had yet discovered that she could not be to him all that he had wildly dared to hope. Too generous to press her now, he yet longed for the morrow to know who had been blessed with the first love of Violet Smythe, and how so priceless a treasure had been left unappropriated.

Violet's feelings were of a different class. But who could describe them? She knew them not herself; but again and again she mentally repeated that she ought to be—she was determined to be happy.

CHAPTER XIII.

whole party were now on the ice. and Violet had lingered con- behind the others, while Mr. and Maria had walked on con- in advance of all. They were however, assembled in a group, all holding by Malcolm's arm. perceived immediately her air of l perturbation, and the bright each cheek. She noticed that looked as if he knew not where or what he was doing. And in was at that moment only con- at Violet was with him, and that his. The sense of disappoint- had for a moment felt on hearing had loved another, had now given

way to a feeling of bliss in the reflection that now, at least, she was his for ever, that he alone had the right to love her, to hear her sorrows, and to console her for them. "I shall commit my welfare to your keeping without a shadow of distrust." She had said so. The truth and earnestness of her tones yet lingered in his ears like music, so sweet that he could listen to naught else. Her hand rested on his arm—the hand which was so soon to be his own. Oh, it was indeed bliss unspeakable! All objects around him, the high, white mountains, the glittering rainbow stalactites, the brilliant sky, seemed all invested with a new beauty and a new glory. They were his own hills—it was his own beautiful and noble land, and now he was to live there with Violet, to be an exile no more. He was so happy that he did not notice that Caroline had turned away, as if to obtain a better view of Ben-nachquaigh, but in reality to conceal the tears she could not repress. Little did he guess the bitter pang which for an instant thrilled through that young and generous heart, or the noble effort that was made

to conquer it. But the mirth of the day was gone for Caroline. Neither did he notice, as they suddenly confronted Mr. Cornish and Maria, that the eyes of the former rested for a moment with a haughty yet searching glance on the countenance of Violet Smythe, nor that hers fell beneath their gaze. He felt, however, that her hand trembled on his arm, but he attributed her emotion to the conversation in which they had just been engaged, and to a consciousness that she was a subject of remark to the rest of the party.

Mr. Cornish and Mr. William Ross were meanwhile fastening on their skates.

"You are going to skate, Mr. Gordon, I think you were saying," said Violet, disengaging her arm.

"Oh, yes ! certainly," cried Malcolm, in an absent manner ; " my skates—I—I believe—I have forgotten them at Ardenнан."

A smile passed round the majority of the party. Caroline tried to join in it, but with indifferent success. Mr. Cornish gave a slight, sneering laugh.

"Mr. Gordon ought to have a flapper, like the inhabitants of Laputa. Though

his mind may not be occupied on exactly the same subjects which engrossed the attention of those wonderful philosophers, I have no doubt the cause of his abstraction is something equally substantial and real, as he will no doubt discover one of these days."

The cold, sarcastic, almost insolent tone in which this speech was made, rather than the speech itself, caused Malcolm to feel very angry. Generally speaking, no one submitted to a little banter with a better grace than Malcolm, and he was usually ready to return it in kind. But now he felt so really incensed, that he was on the point of making a sharp answer, when Miss Smythe anticipated him by saying, in a tone of perfect calmness and self-possession, cold, haughty, yet polite,—

"Mr. Gordon's mind is always occupied with what is just, and kind, and true. He, I am sure, has no reason to blush either for his thoughts or deeds."

Then, turning to Malcolm, whose eyes were directed to her in gratitude and admiration, she continued,—

"As you cannot skate, perhaps you will

continue to give me the benefit of your assistance on the ice."

As she spoke, she again placed her hand within his arm. A glance of suppressed rage, and scorn, and vengeance, shot from the dark eyes of Arthur Cornish. Violet shrank at it, and grew deadly pale, but otherwise her countenance remained unmoved. Malcolm saw it not. He saw only contentment. The whole earth and its inhabitants, all the grudges and annoyances of life were as dust in the balance compared with the happiness he then tasted. Nor did Caroline see it, for again an icy chill came upon her heart, and a momentary blindness blinded her eyes. It seemed almost unbearable to be obliged to listen to the unmeaning babble of the Rosses. It was almost too much for her temper. But they were so good-natured and obliging, that her heart reproached her for her impatience she felt towards them, and she tried to be at least decently civil; but she was in an unhappy, discontented, almost envious frame of mind. She recoiled with a feeling of bitterness the admiration and praise lavished upon her at

home, and thought how astonished they would all be there, could they know that another had been preferred to herself. It seemed a hard and rude awakening from the dream of self-satisfaction in which she had been nursed. By a sort of reaction, a keen sense of inferiority took possession of her mind. But she strove to shake it off. She remembered what she had once heard Malcolm say in a conversation with his sister,—“There is no superiority save in living the best we can with the gifts which have been given to us. We all have it in our power, the very lowest and meanest, to be truly great.” And,—“Oh that I were at home and alone !” thought Caroline, “that I might pray for God’s grace to subdue these vain, wicked, envious feelings, and give me a new and better heart.”

They were now looking at the curlers or at least pretending to look at them ; for it may be doubted if anybody but William Ross bestowed so much as a glance upon them. He and Mr. Cornish were both skating, the former not very skilfully, but the latter with the utmost ease and grace.

ross regarded him with worship-
s. The rest could not choose but
is graceful evolutions, the careless
of his movements, and his whole
which was at once elegant and
ding. He seemed perfectly con-
the admiration he excited; and
htly indifferent towards it. The
t last began to get considerably
ce of the rest of the party, ap-
g nearer the head of the loch.
and Violet were still walking
; the three other girls followed
a little distance. The lovers were
earnest conversation. At last, on
aking place, Malcolm looked up,
g where the two other gentlemen
to, suddenly called out,—“Come
ome back instantly! There is a
ere. I know it of old, and it is
e.”

m Ross instantly turned, with a
k you, Gordon, I have no wish to
a ‘moist, unpleasant body,’ like
talini.” But Mr. Cornish, with-
ing the slightest attention, con-
o skate onwards in the same

direction. Supposing he had not heard and in his alarm quite forgetting their late skirmish, Malcolm called out again more quickly and peremptorily,—“Come back ; for Heaven’s sake, *come* back this moment !”

Arthur Cornish turned his head slightly round, but continued to move on, as he said, haughtily, “I am obliged to you, Mr. Gordon, for your considerate advice or—commands ; but I believe I am quite able to take care of myself.”

He had hardly finished speaking,—the sound of his voice seemed still to vibrate on the air, when the whole party were suddenly startled by a crash, succeeded by a loud plunge, and in the twinkling of an eye Mr. Cornish had disappeared beneath the ice. Consternation was painted on every countenance. Maria Ross became pale as the dead, and fell half-fainting into the arms of her sister. Violet Smythe uttered a shrill and piercing scream, and tossing her arms wildly in the air, rushed towards the broken ice. But she was held back by Caroline, who, though terror-stricken, and filled with a thousand dis-

ting and anxious thoughts, yet preserved her presence of mind.

"Be calm, dearest Violet," she said, "you can do no good but by remaining quiet."

Meanwhile Malcolm and young Ross, attended by one or two of the curlers, had instantaneously flown to the rescue, the former saying as he went, quickly but earnestly,—“Take care of her, Caroline, Heaven’s sake!”

“Let me go!” cried Violet to Caroline; “I must go. Oh, if he should die!”

“Dear Violet,” answered Caroline, with considerable firmness, but with a pale countenance and trembling lips, “there is much danger for Malcolm. He knows the loch, and is prudent and self-assessed.”

“Malcolm! oh, but Arthur!”

Poor Caroline’s heart smote her. After the first shock, *her* thought had been for Malcolm. She had almost forgotten Arthur. “How much less selfish,—how much more feeling Violet has than I!” she thought, with self-reproach. Anxiously she now looked in the direction in which

Mr. Cornish had disappeared, and saw, to her inexpressible joy, that they had succeeded in extricating him. Indeed, they had taken a shorter time to extricate him than I have taken to describe the scene. He had been so short a time in the water, that animation was not suspended.

Caroline could now no longer restrain Violet. She rushed impetuously towards the group of men, in the midst of which was Mr. Cornish.

"Is he safe? is he living?" she said, in a tone of agonised entreaty, as if the answer depended on the will of the respondents, and as if upon it hung all her happiness.

"Quite safe," answered Malcolm, in a tone of cheerful assurance, and turning towards her, in further confirmation, his open, honest countenance, looking so thoroughly as if it could not deceive. "Let us go back to Ardennan, dearest," he added tenderly, and in a lower tone.

But seeming hardly to see who spoke, and looking as if the import of his words was entirely lost upon her, with a slight motion of impatience, she quickly brushed

m, exclaiming in the same tone
onate anxiety, "Arthur! my
Are they not deceiving me?
living?"

was now perfectly restored to his
He had been seated on the ice,
against a snow-heap. But now
impetuously upon his feet, seized
the's hand, and cried,—
!"

all he said; but that one word
panied by a glance of mingled
nd passion. It was enough.
n felt as if the earth had sud-
ned open, and disclosed at his
hideous abyss. But it could not
his fancy played him some wild
e had not repulsed him; he had
those words, or seen that look.
not—could not be. It was all
nge, horrible delusion, which
ish away as suddenly as it had
e was asleep. He was not in his
ut no! There was the moun-
snow, the broken ice, the cold,
the living groups, all palpably
L. And there stood Violet, with

her hand yet locked in that of Arthur Cornish. No, no! It was no dream,—no vision to melt away in the morning light. Strange as it was, it was all too palpable, too real. Malcolm stood rooted to the spot in agony of heart. Now that he felt that it was all true, so absorbing was his misery that he scarce knew where he was, or what was passing around him. Meanwhile Violet had recovered her self-possession. She withdrew her hand abruptly from Arthur's, and colouring violently, said, with great confusion,

“Let us—I should like to go home.”

“Let me attend you,” said Arthur, his tone at once expressing the most perfect ease, and the most perfect respect. But she answered not either by word or gesture. She stole one rapid, furtive glance at Malcolm Gordon, but he stood immovable, with his eyes fixed on the ground. Again a crimson flush overspread her face, and mounted to her forehead. She turned to William Ross.

“Will you give me your arm back to Ardennan?”

He complied instantly, but without h

al gallantry, for even he was sobered
o naturalness by the strange events of
last few minutes. The two Miss
ses were already at the outlet of the
, on their way home. After having,
a very liberal manner, bestowed some
ey on the man who had helped to ex-
ate him from the ice, Mr. Cornish
owed the Ardenнан party at some little
ance. Malcolm still continued to
d in a state of abstraction from mental
ery.

at last he was recalled to a sense of out-
d circumstances by the sound of a soft
e close beside him. He looked up, and
the gaze of a kind, earnest, young face.
was Caroline. Like everybody else, he
quite forgotten the existence of the
ng girl.

Let us go home, Malcolm," she said,
grows late."

he had studied to speak in her usual
e, for she was not certain that he would
her to appear as if she noticed that
thing distressed him; but there was a
ht tremulousness in her voice, increased
her very anxiety to conceal all appear-

ance of emotion. As she spoke she placed her hand on his arm. He drew it within it, and continued to hold it.

"Yes," he said, in a tone more composed than she had expected to hear, "it is late. We had much better go home. Your hand is cold, Caroline. Will you take my plaid? I am quite warm, and *you* must get no harm, my poor child."

Caroline felt almost choking. She could scarce trust herself to say that it was only her hands that were cold. She felt what an effort it must have cost Malcolm to speak with such composure; and she felt, too, what a good, considerate heart must that be, which, even in the midst of its own overwhelming sorrow, could thus think of the welfare and comfort of another.

The short winter's day was now fast drawing to a close. The sun had set; but there was still a pale, yellow glow on the summits of the highest hills, which every minute became fainter and fainter, till it assumed a sort of sickly hue, like the pallor of death. The sky, still without a cloud, was now of a deep violet colour, dimmed

in, frosty haze, through which the stars had just begun to twinkle, small and distant points of silvery light, in the soft, orange, snow-twilight, when, as the reversal of the ordinary arrangement of nature, the light seems to come from the earth rather than from the sky. Edith and Caroline hastened home—walking in perfect silence, the heart of Edith was filled to overflowing with sympathy, a longing desire to comfort the heart-stricken man by whose side she walked. She almost forgot herself, what she felt for him. At that moment, at least, she would have laid aside her own hopes of happiness could she have purchased happiness for herself and Gordon. She longed to speak, to do something to console him, but the fear of hurting him, of intruding on his privacy, held her mute. What could she have given to penetrate the sad mystery of his heart. But she had no right, she dared not seek to unveil it. To him she was only an ignorant child, in whose presence she found amusement for an hour, and whom, benevolently yet

unassumingly, he had tried to instruct and improve. No, it could not be. That passionate gratitude, that longing, reverencing devotion must remain for ever unknown to him. She could not even offer him her sympathy. And thus they walked on to Locharroch, silent, in the snow-light, both with full hearts, Malcolm with one which seemed rent asunder. The spirit of desolation appeared suddenly to have swept away, by a single blast, every beauty and joy from his life's prospect.

Oh, Violet ! Violet ! why so cruel ? why so treacherous as to have promised to be his, when your heart not only *had been*, but still was another's ? Why thus wantonly tamper with feelings so strong and true, a nature so noble, yet so tender ? What reason could have induced you to act thus falsely and foolishly ? Wrong, mistaken, unwise you must have been ; but we will not judge you rashly or harshly till we know more than we do. As soon as Malcolm could sufficiently collect his mind, after the stunning shock it had sustained, and even

mid all the anguish of his heart, this was the first thought. His was that true, unselfish love, which even in disappointment would rather think well than ill of the object of its devotion.

Catherine was crossing the hall just as Malcolm and Caroline came in by the door. Malcolm broke the long silence by asking if it was nearly dinner-time. Catherine answered that it yet wanted more than half an hour, and then inquired if they had had a pleasant excursion. Neither answered; but their silence passed unnoticed, for Catherine was in a hurry, and busy about some household duties, and had merely asked the question by way of saying something polite. The day had been so fine that she never doubted it had been pleasant. Malcolm immediately withdrew to his own room, and did not come down till the dinner-bell rang. Caroline could not avoid being surprised at his self-command. He was much more composed than herself. A superficial observer, or even one who knew nothing of what had passed, would not have remarked any change from his ordinary

demeanour. But to Caroline, who did not know, and who, in all that concerned Malcolm, was gifted with an almost supernatural penetration, an effort in all that he said or did was very apparent. After dinner, Caroline, feeling herself unable to read, as was her custom at that time of day, took her knitting (socks for her father), and joined Catherine at her work-table. Locharroch, as usual, took his afternoon nap in a large easy chair. Malcolm sat a little apart, with a book. But Caroline, who could not avoid stealing a glance at him very frequently, saw that he was not reading. His countenance was grave, almost stern; but Caroline knew it was not the sternness of anger but of self-control. After tea, Catherine left the room, and almost immediately Malcolm followed her. They were a long time absent. Locharroch was now at the *Times*. Caroline sat alone, still knitting; she longed for their return. She wished to know where they were,—if they were together. She was much tempted to leave the room, to ascertain just this; but a fear of intruding withheld her. As she

guess as he gazed out on the
that near him, with but a
ion between, other eyes were
it too—eyes that were watch-
first long night-watch for his
w little did he guess that a
ing heart was at that very
hen he felt himself so desolate,
his image in its inmost core !
en, in the hour of our sorrow,
solation near us, even perchance
chamber, and we know it not !

END OF VOL I.

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STORY OF DOMESTIC LIFE
IN SCOTLAND.

BY

AUTHOR OF "ANNE DYSART."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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HEIR OF ARDENNAN.

CHAPTER I.

rt day, as the Locharroch party
ated over their somewhat silent
meal, a note was handed to Caro-
The delicate seal and paper, the
owing, irregular characters, which
er seemed to her in keeping with
shed, polished demeanour of the
she recognised at once.

o is that note from, Caroline?"
l Mrs. Gordon, in a short sharp
which was prompted, not by her
towards the receiver of the mis-
t towards its suspected writer.

"It is from—from Ardennan."

"Ardennan?"

"Yes, from Miss Smythe." Caroline could not say "Violet."

"What can *she* want?"

"She wishes me to come over to Ardennan, soon after breakfast."

"And do you intend to go?" inquired Catherine, her tone every instant becoming dryer.

"I—I am not sure."

"If you take my advice, you will not go a step. I admire Miss Smythe's coolness in supposing that you have nothing to do but dance attendance upon her. However, of course you may do as you please. I pretend to no control over you, Caroline; I only give you the advice of an older and more experienced person with regard to what seems to me the demands of propriety."

Although Catherine spoke with the most perfect composure of manner and calmness of tone, Caroline perceived that she was in that frame of mind yclept "a bad humour." Caroline was usually not

y patient under her sister-in-law's bad
mours, perhaps not so patient as she
ght to have been; but to-day she was
sincerely sorry for her, she sympa-
ed too truly in the wound she had
eived, partly through her pride, partly
ough her best affections, to resent even
feeling any little effect of temper she
ght display. All the while that the
e dialogue above related lasted, Mal-
m sat silent, and apparently as if he
not hear or attend to what passed.
oline stole a glance at him, to try if
could discover from his countenance
at he wished her to do; but she could
d nothing there.

Immediately after breakfast he left the
m, and Catherine shortly followed him.
oline, in an undecided state of mind,
drew to the library, which was also
d as a writing-room. Violet's note had
tained merely a simple request for her
pany, without giving any reason for
wish to see her. Yet to Caroline it
med unkind, and scarcely dignified, to
use. Oh, if she could only discover

Malcolm's wishes ! At last, she decided upon a middle course ; she would write a note, and say that she would come to Ardennan on the following morning, if nothing occurred to prevent her. Perhaps before then she might be better able to decide which was the proper way to act. She had taken pen in hand to execute her resolution, when Malcolm came into the room, and seating himself at the opposite side of the table, inquired in a husky voice, but with an unmoved countenance, and looking her straight in the face, "Do you mean to go to Ardennan, Caroline ?"

"I am not quite certain," she answered, hesitatingly ; "what do you think ?"

"I think—that is, I wish—it is a great favour I ask you, Caroline ; but, *will* you go, for my sake ?"

Caroline's heart beat with something like pleasure ; she looked up with eager animation. "Oh, yes ! I will go ; gladly, willingly, if you wish me."

"Thank you, Caroline," he said emphatically ; and then continued in a lower,

a still steady tone, "I will tell you what I wish you to go, because you have a right to know, and because I think you will understand and feel my reasons. Perhaps he wishes to tell you something that will clear her from blame; and if you refuse to go, it might seem as if I had deceived you, and I could not bear that you should suppose I was capable of such a resentment." And for a moment he looked proud, like Catherine; and Caroline felt that his was a nobler pride. "And now," he added, "when you get on your things, I shall have the dog-cart to be got ready for you, and I will tell Catherine that you are going on my request."

Caroline was soon ready. She found him in the hall waiting for her, with a large heap of cloaks and plaids; he wrapped her carefully up for her cold, and as he assisted her into the carriage, he pressed her hand in a manner which seemed to say, "Thank you."

Caroline thought of him, in his generous sorrow, far more even than in the approaching interview with Violet.

When she reached Ardennan she found that she was expected, for she was shown straight up to Miss Smythe's dressing-room. Violet was seated in a large easy-chair by the fireside, with a small table beside her, upon which lay an open desk, writing-paper, envelopes, and a thick sealed letter, with the sealed side uppermost. Violet was dressed with all her usual care and neatness; nothing in her appearance betokened hurry or confusion, or seemed to indicate that she had been the subject of any extraordinary or violent mental emotion. Perhaps she was a shade paler than usual, but it might merely have been the effect of the contrast between the dark blue dress she wore, and her transparently fair complexion. She rose immediately on Caroline's entrance, and advanced to meet her, holding out her hand. Caroline took it in silence.

"This is kind of you, Caroline," said Violet, with a slightly tremulous voice, while a faint flush rose to her cheek; "I had begun to fear you would not come."

"Why did you wish to see me? Have you anything to say to me?"

Caroline tried to speak gently and to look kindly; but she could not conceal altogether the alteration in her feelings towards Violet. The latter was keenly sensible of it. All her composure, which had never been genuine, vanished at once; she became violently agitated, and burst into tears. "You despise me," she cried; "I have forfeited your regard, and I deserve it! I deserve it! But you might pity me, for I am most miserable."

Caroline was moved; her tenderness in measure returned. She threw her arms round Violet, and kissed her. The latter sobbed out, "Oh, do not forsake me, Caroline! for I have not a friend in the world."

Then Caroline could refrain no longer, and cried in sorrow, not in anger, "Oh, Violet! why, then, have you thrown from you the affection of your truest friend? Why have you cast from you the warmest, truest heart in all the world?"

"Is he much distressed?" she inquired, with great anxiety.

"Can you doubt that he is distressed?" Caroline rejoined, with a partial return

of her former coldness, as the image of Malcolm in his grief was again vividly brought back to her imagination.

Violet made a gesture of despair. "Ah, what a wretch I am to have caused misery to such a man! But, Caroline, I did not intend it, I did not mean it; I did not, indeed. I would rather have died. I would rather have died a thousand deaths. Caroline, Caroline! will you believe me?"

Again she spoke with the utmost earnestness, seeming to watch for Caroline's answer with the most eager anxiety. "I cannot doubt you, Violet," she answered; "but how, then, has it been?"

"I always knew he was too good and wise for me," continued Violet; "but I saw he was attached to me, and I thought I might make him happy, and as his wife obtain a sort of peace at least for myself. But I sent for you, Caroline, to ask if you would hear my—my confession. I thought if you did, though you might still blame, you would pity me. I thought, perhaps, you would counsel me with your good, true heart, and clear understanding. You are younger

are simple-minded, but you are far
and better than I am. And, oh,
no one in this world ever stood
in need of counsel and sympathy
at this moment. Promise me
you will hear me! Promise me that
you will not forsake me!"

Another and tenderer embrace,
he gave the required promise. At
that time, Caroline did not think of it;
afterwards it seemed strange when
reflected on the altered position in
which he stood with regard to Violet.
Three short months ago, the latter
had opened to her the beau-ideal of all
that was lovely and charming in hu-

man. She had desired her friendship
with romantic ardour, as one of the great-
est that the world could afford. And
now there was this same Violet entreating
him in the most beseeching terms,
regarding her, as it were, the judge of her
important actions, and most secret

There was a change! But such changes
are every-day occurrence in this
ever scene-shifting world. What is

to-day a favour sought is to-morrow a favour granted. What we shun as an evil may come as a blessing. What we pray for as a boon may be granted as a curse. All things change, even the wishes and affections of the human heart. Needful for us, then, is it to pray, "Thy will be done!" as even supposing our own will were the best and happiest for us, who dare say that his will of this year would be his will of next. How often have we all had reason to be thankful that things have gone differently from what we in our blindness or fickleness would have had them go!

And now, reader, entreating your pardon for this digression, I shall, if you please, resume the thread of my narrative.

"Take off your bonnet, then, Caroline, and sit down," said Violet; "for my story, which is neither more nor less than the story of my life, will not be a very short one, and I have much, much to consult you about besides, my only friend."

Violet was not in the habit of making

professions, or of using tender epithets; therefore an expression such as the above came from her with a real significance, and was not the mere conventional sentimentalism of a common-place young lady. Caroline's warm, open heart was greatly touched. Her former affection for Violet, though somewhat altered in complexion, seemed to return. The latter certainly appeared, whatever might have been her fault, to have suffered greatly herself. According to her request, Caroline therefore seated herself in a listening attitude, some little distance from her companion, who thus began her tale :—

“My birth and parentage you already know. My father, by his own exertions, raised himself from a low origin. As I remember him, he was a tall, thin, gentlemanly man, with a grave, mild, intelligent face. You would not have guessed from his exterior the practical clear-headedness and active energy of his character, though you might more easily have been induced to give him credit for the refined taste, and artistic turn of mind also possessed. His house in Liverpool

was adorned by many very fine works of painting and sculpture, and was furnished altogether more tastefully and elegantly than any house I ever saw—very different indeed from—from this.

“My mother was a very beautiful little woman, a cousin of the present Sir George Cornish of Harbury. She was poor and an orphan, and, before her marriage at least, little noticed by her fine relations. After her marriage, as they had never been positively unkind to her before, there was, I believe, a good deal of intercourse between the families. I remember being occasionally at Harbury in my early childhood, but not liking it, because Arthur tyrannized over me.

“What my mother’s character was I cannot remember, as she died when I was too young to be able to form any just idea of it. I have heard, however, that she had very strong feelings, with a proud, passionate disposition. She was, I believe, devotedly attached to my father, and their union I have heard was happy. Shortly after her death, my brother George, who is two or three years older than I am, was

sent to school. I was kept at home, under the care of a nursery governess for some time. These were among the happiest years of my life. My father made a great pet of me. As little as his melancholy, almost dreamy, exterior would have induced one to surmise his business abilities, would his mild, indifferent manner have led one to conjecture the fondness which really existed in his heart. He surrounded me with everything the heart of a child could desire. He loaded me with caresses, and when he was disengaged, made me his constant companion. I loved him, Caroline, as I have never loved any one since—no, not *any* one. The ‘sweet madness,’ the wild misery I have felt since then is not, I believe, so truly *love* as what I experienced for my father.

“Ah! Caroline, had he lived, I should have been a different creature this day. But my misfortune has been that I have never had any one to think of but myself. You must not, however, imagine that my father paid personally much attention to my education, or interfered at all, except

indirectly by his kindness, with my mental training. His absorbing avocations completely prevented his having time for that. Nor do I think that even had he possessed leisure, he would have thought of attempting the task. It was not in his way; and moreover, I was a pretty, engaging child, and what more was necessary in a little girl? Like many men, I believe his notions of womenkind were dim and conventional. He did not know, or at least but dimly, that the heart which flutters in a woman's bosom, is made of pretty much the same sort of stuff as that which beats in a man's, and that the difference is not so much a generic difference, as the product of entirely opposite physical and social influences. The form or direction our passions take may be different, but the passions themselves are the same. My governess was a weak-minded, amiable, indolent person, who permitted me to take all my own way. I was a passionate, wayward child, and self-willed to a degree. I loved and hated with equal vehemence. With regard to my lessons, I learned them by fits and

starts, when I was in the humour. Though often idle, at times I was violently industrious, and altogether was not much behind my compeers, either in knowledge or in accomplishments. The influence of my father's elegant taste, and the beautiful forms by which I was surrounded, early inspired me with a horror for coarseness and vulgarity, either in persons or things. I have ever been peculiarly alive to the charms of grace and beauty; and yet, Caroline, I have not your devoted love of nature, or your delight in all her forms and phases.

“ When I was about ten years of age, it was deemed advisable that I should be sent to school. A first-rate establishment in the neighbourhood of London was accordingly selected; and with a maid to attend me, I was removed thither, to be made ‘elegant’ and ‘accomplished,’ with all possible despatch. How I did hate school at first! though afterwards I got more reconciled to it. The mistress of the establishment was a tall, stout, lady-like woman, the quintessence of common-place propriety. She was kind enough to us, in

a formal sort of style ; but as to inspiring any affection in her pupils, or endeavouring to influence them by gaining their confidence, I suppose the remotest possibility of such a thing never once entered her head. But I believe the woman sincerely intended to do her duty, and, moreover, conscientiously believed that she did it. Besides the 'best masters in every kind of fashionable accomplishment,' our 'moral and religious instruction' was carefully attended to, inasmuch as we were made to read two chapters of the Bible daily, verse about, to learn catechism and hymns on Sunday, and to listen very frequently to lectures on conduct and the proprieties, from Mrs. Holding herself, and one of the governesses who had a sermonizing turn of mind, and who, I imagine, believed it to be her mission to preach on all possible occasions. In short, rules and regulations were laid down for the very minutest actions of our lives. The codification of our laws would have furnished a statute-book little inferior in bulk to that of the law of England. No attempt, however, was made to inspire us with a spark of that vital principle

which supersedes all laws; to 'keep the heart with all diligence,' was a text rarely preached on at High Clareville House. Then, somehow or other, all things seemed to be placed on the same level of importance. To come awkwardly into a room, or to play a false note in music, was almost as heinous an offence as to be guilty of pride or unkindness. Thus we were brought up with no just ideas, or what was worse, with no just feelings of right and wrong. I was vain and ambitious, and did not like to be outshone; therefore I applied myself with tolerable industry, and became what is called 'very accomplished.' In short, I was the lion of the school; not solely, however, on account of my accomplishments. I knew, even then, that my large fortune weighed with Mrs. Holding and her household, as with the rest of the world; and I enjoyed the knowledge, and relished the homage, even while I partly despised those who paid it.

"But besides the meagre mental aliment I derived from the school-course of instruction, I obtained a vast deal of contra-

band intellectual nourishment, such as it was, by smuggling circulating library volumes. I had read all Byron's Works, not to mention Moore's, and L. E. L.'s, before I was fifteen. I was deeply read in Bulwer, and already in love with Zanoni. I had read many French novels even then; for having once chanced to meet with a volume of Eugène Sue, I was so much pleased with it, that not a little of my liberal allowance of pocket-money was consumed in the purchase of this kind of literature. I still prefer French novels to English ones; for the cold, tame school of Miss Austen and Miss Edgeworth I have no taste at all. Lately, indeed, I have sometimes imagined I might learn to appreciate a simpler, less exciting style, both of life and literature; but I have discovered at last that it was a fatal mistake. Passion, excitement, are the natural atmosphere of a restless mind. I must return to them."

"Oh Violet!" cried Caroline, "do not say so."

"For what else has my education fitted me, Caroline? I have been condemned to

such a life by circumstances, which are but another name for Fate."

"Dear Violet! I think you must be wrong," began Caroline.

"It is easy for you to say I am wrong, Caroline, who have been so differently situated. I have been told that you were spoiled at home. I wish I had been spoiled in the same way. There is a worse kind of spoiling by far than the indulgence of a happy home. I am the victim of a wretched education."

As Violet said these words, she leaned back in her chair, and a short pause succeeded. Caroline was thinking solemnly how many and how great her blessings and advantages had been, and how thoughtlessly and thanklessly she had hitherto received them. What else she thought was thus expressed :

"Violet, I feel that you have indeed been very unhappily circumstanced. Had I been in your place, I might not have acted so well as you have done. Still I think there must be something beyond and above circumstances, otherwise where were our responsibility, dear Violet?"

But Violet, passionately clasping her hands together, cried hastily, "Do not speak to me of responsibility. Let me go on now with my story." Caroline again assumed a listening attitude, and Violet continued:

"After I left school, I went abroad for a few years with the family of a school friend. I was proud, fond of power and admiration, and with an imagination much inflamed by the books I read. I had innumerable admirers, and I gloried in my triumphs, and yet, at the same time, I despised the mass of my adorers. At that time, though I rejoiced in the power my money and my beauty bestowed, I never in my own heart rated either at more than they were worth. I was never mercenary, and never false. No, Caroline, much as appearances are against me, my conscience assures me I am guiltless of these crimes. In time I began to grow weary of my *grand succès*; it had become very flat and stale, and I longed for *une grande passion*, by way of variety. But I could see no worthy object; all men seemed to me equally uninteresting at the end of a

fortnight's acquaintance. On my coming of age, I returned to England, and was then invited to Harbury.

“Harbury is a fine old place, quite an old baronial hall. The park is extensive, the timber of magnificent growth, and the whole place bears evident marks, not only of its own antiquity, but of the antiquity of the family by whom it is still inhabited. The present Sir George Cornish affects to be proud of his race, but in reality he is not so. He is a tall, fine-looking old man, of noble presence; but he has as sordid, money-loving a soul as ever presided over a counting-house. I believe from the first minute almost he beheld me, he destined me for his son's wife. Lady Harriet Cornish, who is quite a modern fine lady, coincided entirely in his views. Lady Harriet is one of those women who set a value on rank, without being proud of it. She does not esteem either that or birth for its own sake, but solely because they bestow distinction and fashion. Therefore, as wealth and beauty likewise bestow fashion and distinction, she agreed with her husband, that in sending me to

Harbury, Providence manifestly designed me for the wife of their son. Now Arthur's character is in many respects the opposite of that of his parents. He is very proud—proud to a degree—of his birth, of his pedigree, unsullied by one single *mésalliance*. He is proud also of his beauty and his aristocratic bearing;—remember, I said *proud*, not vain; there is about him none of the littleness of vanity. As you must have noticed, he never seeks or cares for the admiration of others. When he makes himself agreeable, it is with some other object than that of gaining an applause which can add nothing to the opinion he already entertains of himself."

As Violet spoke, it just glanced across Caroline's mind whether, after all, "the littleness of vanity" were not preferable to this inhuman, contemptuous pride, which neither gave nor sought. She doubted, too, whether any one could be so utterly negligent of the opinions of others; and she guessed that it was only of the suffrages of those whom he haughtily conceived to be beneath him, that Arthur

Cornish was so careless. She was confirmed in this idea by the recollection of the manner in which he had treated her ever since the day on which she had received so coldly his advances towards a flirtation. Violet continued :

“I have forgotten to mention, but I think you already know, that my father died two years before I left High Clareville House. His death, even at the time, was a bitter grief, but it quickly passed; my mind was then otherwise occupied. It is lately, within the last two or three years, that I have mourned for him most, and felt that in him I lost my best friend on earth. Shortly after my father’s death, my brother went into the army, and except at rare intervals, I have seen but little of him since. He is both an amiable and honourable young man, but not the sort of person I could ever apply to for support or counsel.

“But to return to Harbury. It was not at all a gay neighbourhood; but in the autumn and winter Lady Harriet filled the house with company, and in spring she took me with her to London. During

the whole of the first year, and part of the second that I spent with Lady Harriet, her son was abroad, having travelled over all Europe and a part of Asia. He had been as far east as Palmyra. He did not often write home; but when he did, his letters seemed to me to be full of fire and genius, and added to the interest which had already been created in me by the accounts I heard on all sides of his manifold attractions. A portrait of him, taken at the age of eighteen, which hung in the picture-gallery, bore witness that with regard to his personal appearance, report had not exaggerated. I had, of course, seen many handsome men, but never had I seen a countenance which so seized upon my imagination. Boyish though it was, with prophetic feeling I seemed to read there my destiny. His father and mother were never weary of enlarging on his talents and attractions; while the latter was constantly relating to me the number of ladies who were dying of love for him, accompanying such communications with a pretty plain hint, that she knew only one woman worthy of him,—for, you must

understand, Lady Harriet and I were the greatest possible friends, after a worldly, mutual-convenience fashion. Afterwards I found that my praises had been trumpeted to Arthur in the same style; but on him they had a different effect. They only served to prejudice him against me, as a party in a design to entrap him: this I learned afterwards. He came home at last."

Here Violet stopped for a second, as if to take breath; soon, however, she continued:

"While in all other respects he surpassed my most romantic expectations, in one only he disappointed me,—he paid me no attention whatever, indeed, almost slighted me. He was the first man who had ever seemed entirely indifferent to me, and I was partly mortified and partly indignant. I think I must have become rather sulky; silent I was, at least, and would neither speak nor sing. I wished to show my perfect indifference towards him.

"Such had been the state of matters

for several weeks, when one day, as I was taking the air in a walk bordered on one side by a thick fence of high laurels, I heard voices on the other side of the screen. I recognized them immediately as those of Arthur Cornish and a friend of his, then at Harbury. They were speaking of me. The visitor asked Arthur why he did not comply with the wishes of Sir George and Lady Harriet, and marry me. 'Because,' Arthur replied—I remember his very words, as I remember every word he ever spoke—'I will not marry any one on compulsion, in the first place, and in the second, I cannot endure the girl. If they must plot to give me a wife, they might have fixed on something different from a tradesman's daughter. No, I wash my hands of a vulgar, mercenary affair of that kind; if I do not marry for love, I will marry for ambition—never for money.'

" 'But she is pretty.'

" 'An insipid kind of prettiness, which does not arrive at the dignity of beauty. When I compare the girl Smythe with

some of the Greek or Italian women, I am inclined to say with Lord Byron,—

“ Who round the north for paler dames would seek ?

How poor their forms appear ! how languid, wan, and weak ! ”

And their souls are the counterparts of their forms,—no fire, no passion ; all their feelings, if they ever had any, trimmed into the current stereotype of propriety. A more perfect specimen of her class than Miss Smythe I never saw. Can anything be more common-place than her modest airs of silence, or more superlatively missyish than her refusals to sing, doubtless in the hope of being pressed ? She may wait long enough before I ask her, as I feel convinced the performance would not repay the trouble of making the request.’

“ ‘ But she is said to be clever, and a good musician.’

“ ‘ Said to be—by Lady Harriet, who is no authority in the present case. I hate boarding-school musicians and clever girls, who can give you day and date for the battle of Hastings, or the signing of Magna Charta. But let us leave Miss Smythe,

as I shall infallibly begin to yawn if we do not hit upon a more interesting topic. She need not hope that there is any chance of her ever becoming Mrs. Arthur Cornish.'

"As I heard all this, I felt almost mad with indignation. I felt that Arthur had completely mistaken me, and I determined that he should ere long discover his mistake. I made an inward resolution that I would strain every nerve to bring him to my feet, and then I would reject him. I saw, however, that it would be necessary to adopt an entirely new system of tactics. That very same night, after a moderate share of entreaty, I allowed myself to be prevailed upon to play and sing. I chose a part—the most passionate part of the opera of 'Lucrezia Borgia.' I have been told that I might have made a fortune on the stage. I think I surpassed myself that evening. The whole party were struck; and Arthur, with a look of wonder and admiration in his eyes, besought me, in his most fervent manner, to sing it again; but I answered carelessly that I was tired, and I did not perform again.

for several days. The same evening a conversation ensued on music and its capability of expressing every shade of feeling and passion, and then passed on to a discussion of those feelings and passions themselves. I took the opportunity of showing Arthur Cornish that I could speak as well as sing, but I never addressed him. I had now so far gained my end; and after having thoroughly coquetted him into attention, I next sought to win him still further by seeming to reciprocate it. Ere long he became devoted to me; but I was playing a dangerous game. Ah, Caroline! how fascinating he can be you do not know. He bewitched my soul. My desire of retaliation vanished like a dream of the night, before the bright, bright sunshine of his passionate devotion. I forgot everything but love. The whole world—my whole life seemed concentrated in Arthur Cornish. I worshipped him, and he seemed to repay my devotion with a love equally passionate and profound. It was the month of March. We were to go to London in April, and be married there in May. Meanwhile our engagement was

to be kept private till on the eve of being fulfilled. And now Caroline, when I da to look back on that time, and it is ve seldom indeed that I venture to recall I am puzzled to say whether I was happy or not. The feelings which then possessed me were rather like the intoxication of ecstasy than the calm of happiness. And yet, such was the delirium of joy I then experienced, such was the delirium of passion which succeeded, that all sensations since have seemed feeble and superficial, all pleasures and pains vapid and unmeaning. Caroline, I am now come to that part of my story which I can hardly bear to relate; but I must and will."

As Violet spoke she became deadly pale while her face had yet a look of the most fixed determination. She continued in a low, yet firm and emphatic voice,

"We lived in Upper Belgrave-street. One morning, when I was sitting alone in my own room, a note was brought me by the post. Here it is!"

As Violet spoke, she took from her dress a note, contained in an envelope, and handed it to Caroline. It had been sealed

with a small pink seal, and the address was in small, rather stiff, and somewhat foreign-looking handwriting.

"Read it," said Violet. Caroline obeyed. Within, the writing was the same as on the envelope. The contents were as follows :

"Madam,—If you will to-day or to-morrow, or any day this week, call at the address given below, you shall be made acquainted with something which very nearly concerns your happiness. I conjure you, Madam, not to be deterred by the request proceeding from an anonymous petitioner. Come, if you value truth and justice,—come by all you hold sacred and dear.

"EGLANTINE."

The note was dated from Corcyra Cottage, — Road, St. John's Wood.

"You went?" asked Caroline, greatly amazed and deeply interested. The whole tale appeared to her rather like some wild romance than a real occurrence in the life of a person she knew, nay, who was then actually before her. Widely different, indeed, were all the elements and events

which composed poor Violet's story from those which made up the sum of Caroline's innocent, secluded, happy life, with its quiet pleasures, and simple though ardent aspirations !

“ I went, not that day, but the next. It was early in the day; Arthur had gone out, and I told Lady Harriet that I wished to take the air. She first offered me the carriage, then a footman to accompany me ; but I contrived to elude both proposals. As soon as I was out of the house, I walked quickly away, and hiring the first cab I encountered, gave orders to be driven to Corcyra Cottage. My feelings as I drove thither were full of curiosity rather than anxiety. At last the cab stopped, and I got out. I found myself in front of a low wall with an ornamental gateway. Behind the wall was a screen of lilacs and laburnums now in full bloom. I entered and passed along a path, between beds gay with beautiful flowers, towards a cottage ornée. I was quickly admitted into a small hall decorated with statuettes and vases of flowers, and then up-stairs. On the stairs I met a child, a beautiful,

the most beautiful little girl I ever saw. I stopped to caress it, and the little creature looked into my face with its dark eyes, which, young as it was, seemed full of a passionate mystery. A mysterious thrill of pain seemed for a second almost to transfix me to the spot. Those eyes reminded me strangely of eyes whose light was as the light of my soul, whose glance seemed to comprehend my whole destiny. I recovered myself, however, immediately, and passed on. I quickly found myself in sort of drawing-room or boudoir, small, but exquisitely and luxuriously furnished. In a low *fauteuil* by a window, which looked into the garden, sat a lady, who rose immediately on my entrance. She was tall, and magnificently handsome. Her dress and style altogether were foreign rather than English. She was very young, her complexion of a clear olive, while a rich warm glow mantled in her cheek. Her features, which were very fine, had a tendency towards the classic model, but were entirely devoid of that cold repose, calculated to inspire awe rather than love. Her eyes were dark, dreamy, and

almond-shaped; but not like the eyes of the child I had met on the stairs. As they fixed on me, their expression was full of an anxious sadness. Her hair was black as midnight, and folded round and round her head in long plaits. Her colour visibly deepened as she addressed me. Her voice was low and melodious, and her accent decidedly foreign, though she spoke perfectly good English. 'Miss Smythe?' she said gracefully, yet evidently with great nervousness. I bowed my assent. 'I do not ask you to be seated, Miss Smythe,' she continued with increasing confusion, 'because I am not sure that when you know who I am, you will choose to be seated in my—in this house.' I was now dreadfully agitated, so much so that I could not conceal my agitation. It communicated itself to my companion, and we stood gazing at one another as fascinated—neither as it would seem daring to break the silence. At that instant a step was heard upon the stairs. Simultaneously we started. 'What is that?' cried the foreign lady, 'I gave orders that'—suddenly she stopped, for

a voice, which I knew well, inquired of some one in an angry tone, 'What does this mean? who is with your mistress?' Caroline, my heart died within me, all the objects in the room swam before my eyes, and had I not grasped a chair, I should have fallen. I am certain that for a second or two I was quite unconscious. Like one of the changes of a dream, in the entire possession of my faculties, I suddenly stood face to face with Arthur Cornish. We gazed at one another, and for a moment, it was but a moment, his glance fell. Then he turned to the foreign lady, saying, in a cold, bitter tone, which I saw wounded her a thousand times more than if it had been an angry one; 'This is your doing, Eglantine. I have to thank you for this considerate kindness.' Then turning to me, he said with suppressed anger, 'This is not a proper place for you, Violet. Let me take you home, or at least to your carriage.' I answered; 'My presence here seems now needless. I have learned all that is necessary for me to know; enough, Mr. Cornish, to induce me to absolve you from all further in-

terest in my proceedings, or care for my conduct.' As I spoke, Arthur became pale with passion. 'Violet,' he cried, 'only hear me, and judge not so cruelly.' 'I should prefer hearing no more,' was my answer, 'but if I must hear any one, it shall be this lady, whose communication your entrance has interrupted.' 'Hear her!' he cried, 'the conversation of such a lady as she is, is not for you.' Here the unfortunate lady, who for the last few minutes had stood as if turned to stone, suddenly burst into a passion of tears, and threw herself at Arthur's feet. 'Oh, have some mercy upon me, Arthur!' she cried. 'have some mercy. Do not be so very cruel. If I am bad and wicked, as I know I am, and not fit society for this beautiful lady, whom you—you *love* (the word seemed as if it would suffocate her) for whose sake have I become what I am? Have I not left everything, my home, my kindred, my own native Greece for you? Have I not followed you faithfully through many lands? Have I not given up my good name for your sake? and far more than all these, have I not given up

my peace of mind for evermore? Oh! guilty wretch that I am, wilfully guilty, I deserve it all; but, Arthur, you ought not to upbraid me. Oh, Arthur! I am the mother of your child, I might say your children.' I now saw that the unhappy creature was, indeed, once more about to become a mother. Even amid the absorbing misery of my own feelings, my heart bled for her. I trusted eagerly that Arthur would give her one kind word in reply. If he had known, it was then the only way by which he could at all have lessened my anger!—But he answered sternly: 'Yes, and you have sought to repay yourself for the sacrifices you so effectively describe, and to revenge yourself on me, because I have learned to *love another* whose name is not to be mentioned in the same sentence with yours, by seeking to ruin me in her good opinion and thus prevent my marriage with her. You have not behaved so as to deserve compassion or kindness from me, Eglantine.' Then turning to me, he continued passionately, 'Violet, I acknowledge the guilt of my connection with this

woman. It is a connection which I have resolved this very day to dissolve for ever. Had it not been out of compassion, which I beseech you, do not make me repent of it should have been dissolved long ago. Violet, for this you will not cast me off? Ere I had time to reply, Eglantine again began to speak. She was now comparatively calm, though her bosom heaved and her countenance bespoke a sort of resigned despair. Her voice was low and weak and her words seemed to come with difficulty. 'You do me injustice, Arthur Cornish,' she said; 'you have most grievously mistaken me. Listen to me now till I explain my motives. It is the only request I shall ever make you, and listen too, beautiful and virtuous lady, for I would not wish you to think worse of me than I deserve. It is not many days ago since I heard, how it matters not, that Arthur Cornish was going to be married to a great heiress—that his parents had arranged the match for him, and that it was only after much difficulty and a long time that he had been induced to accede to their wishes. Of Miss Smythe

I knew nothing except her name, and that she was very rich. In the foolish fondness of my heart, I believed that it was for my sake that Arthur had not wished to marry. I thought he loved me and not the great heiress, and that his heart as well as mine was to be sacrificed to the ambition of his parents. I thought I would appeal to Miss Smythe herself, and that, perhaps, when she saw that it was only for her wealth and to please his parents, she would herself break off the marriage. But indeed I hardly knew what I thought or expected. For the last few days I have been nearly mad, and now I see I have been greatly mistaken in my wild conjectures, in my poor foolish hopes, which could not be persuaded at once to relinquish their all. I see clearly now, Arthur, that you love me no longer—that your intended marriage is not one of interest but of love. Had I known this I should not have acted as I have done. But it is over, and there is nothing left for me now but to die.’ As she finished speaking, her voice faltered nervously,

she trembled all over, and the bitter tears rolled abundantly down her cheeks. Arthur seemed softened.

‘No, Eglantine,’ he said, ‘do not say so. All the comforts you possess are yours still. This very day I shall put it out of my own power ever to resume them. You are still young and handsome, and may one day marry.’

“She started as if stung by a viper, her eyes flashed, and she cried indignantly,

“‘I took gifts from your love, Arthur, but I will take nothing from your charity. You may marry, but I never will, for my love is not such as yours.’

“And again she wept hysterically. She now said,

“‘No, Eglantine, his love is not such as yours, nor is it such as mine. I will not marry Arthur Cornish to be the plaything of an hour, then thrown aside as a worthless toy. I will not live to be a neglected wife, and as I am not greater or more beautiful than you, how am I to know that if it had not been for my wealth he would ever have asked me to be his wife?’

at all? Farewell, Eglantine. From my heart I pity you; but your sorrows have taught me how to act.'

"As I finished speaking, I rushed out of the room.

"'Violet!'" cried Arthur, quickly pursuing me, but in vain, for I almost flew; 'Violet, for mercy's sake, if you would not drive me mad, Violet!' But I would not listen, I would not even look at him. I sprang into the cab, and ordered the coachman to drive as quick as possible to Upper Belgrave-street. Lady Harriet was out. I instantly rang for my maid, and helped her to pack everything I possessed. I had been invited by the friends with whom I had formerly travelled to pay them a visit in London, and I now wrote a note to offer to come that very afternoon. My offer was accepted, and before Lady Harriet had returned to dress for dinner, I had arrived in Baker-street. I left a note for her, to thank her for her kindness to me; but to inform her, that as I had broken off my engagement with Mr. Cornish, I felt that I could no longer remain a guest in the house where he

lived. I referred her to her son for an explanation.

“ ‘ Early the next morning, earlier than Lady Harriet’s usual hour of rising, she called on me in Baker-street, talked of Arthur’s love and despair, and contrition, and her own and Sir George’s great attachment to me, finally entreating me to open and read a thick letter, which she had brought with her, and which she said Arthur had sat up all night to write. It was in vain that I refused. Lady Harriet would take no denial, and insisted on leaving the letter with me. No sooner, however, was she gone than I enclosed it in an envelope, and writing Arthur’s address, as I then believed for the last time in my life, I sent it off to the post-office. The next thing I did was to write to Eglantine, - to offer to settle an annuity on her, or if she preferred, to assist her in any scheme she might have thought of to earn a livelihood for herself. I despatched this note by a private messenger, who brought me back for an answer that the lady to whom it was addressed was very ill, so ill that she could not answer it.

This intelligence made me so anxious that I believe, in my excitement, I should have set off immediately to Corcyra-cottage, had it not been for the dread of meeting Arthur Cornish, who I thought might have been drawn thither by the news of Eglantine's illness. All that night I passed in a sort of fever. The next morning I was told a woman wished to see me. I recognised the girl who had opened the door at Corcyra-cottage. She seemed in great distress, and as she spoke began to cry. She told me that Eglantine had died a few hours before, in giving birth to a still-born child. She had, however, been able to read my note, and had sent me her 'thanks.' She said she dare not send her blessing. 'Oh, Miss,' cried the girl, 'she was the most humblest, gentlest creetur, and I could not help liking her, Miss, though she was no better than she should be, and a kep-mistress; and I am afeard, Miss, the gentleman has broken her heart, poor thing.' She then told me that Eglantine besought me to pay her funeral expenses, and to have her child brought up in an honest way.

Sarah, for that was the girl's name, offered to take the child home to her mother's for a few days, and then asked me if she should inform Mr. Cornish. I said certainly not, unless he should inquire. She then left me. I now began to wonder what I should do with the child. At last I remembered a very benevolent maiden lady, in reduced circumstances, a distant connection of my father's, who, when I was a child, resided in Liverpool, but who some years ago had returned to her birthplace, a village in South Wales. To this lady I wrote, relating the history of Eglantine Barwell, for such was the name by which her dying mother requested she might be called, and asking if she would consent to receive the poor desolate one as a boarder. I received a favourable answer, and with Sarah for a nursemaid, little Eglantine was despatched to Wales. She has remained there ever since. About once a year I hear of her from her kind guardian, who thanks me for having given such a solace to her solitary life. I have settled upon little Eglantine a small competence,

and I trust when she grows up she may become the wife of some respectable man.

“While I was thus forced to exert myself, my spirits seemed kept up by the excitement. But no sooner was all necessity for exertion over than I sank into a sort of feverish despair, interrupted occasionally by fits of the most passionate grief. I could not resign myself to my destiny. Torturing regrets pursued me everywhere. I could not drive the remembrance of Arthur from my heart. My thoughts of him were strangely compounded of love and bitterness. I believe, Caroline, had he written to me then, I should not have returned his letter unread; and yet all the while I maintained to the world a calm exterior, and I rushed into all sorts of gaiety and dissipation in the fruitless attempt to drown thought and to banish memory. I even tried gaming; but gaining a large sum one night from a lady, I was horror-struck by her look of agonized despair. I waited on her the next morning, and restored to her all she had lost: and together we

vowed never to touch a card again. I believe we have both kept the vow. She called me her preserver, with tears in her eyes ; and it seemed to me that after this incident, I was less miserable. To the restless devouring agony I had hitherto felt, succeeded a sort of blank dreary hopelessness and weariness. I continued to live with the friends to whose house I had gone after leaving that of Sir George. Arthur, I heard, had gone to travel in Syria and Asia Minor. Meanwhile, I had received many kind and pressing invitations from the Rosses, to take up my abode with them ; but somehow or other there was something singularly unattractive to me in the idea of living in Glasgow. At last, however, they purchased Ardennan, and I promised to come to stay with them in the highlands as soon as they should be settled in their new residence. This was about a year ago. I was then in Rome with my friends, who were spending the winter in that wonderful city. In spring we went northwards to Venice, Florence, and Genoa, and after passing a few weeks among

the beautiful scenery of the Maritime Alps, we passed on to the south of France. At Marseilles I first met with—with Mr. Gordon. He was the first of the sex in whose company I had felt in the smallest degree interested since I had known Arthur Cornish. Handsome and more elegant men I had undoubtedly seen, but no one who seemed so thoroughly to unite the manners and feelings of a gentleman with the liberal and intelligent sentiments of a man who had mixed with the world. He joined our party. We were constantly together. His society seemed to do me good. I was happier, or rather less miserable, than I had been for a long time. As a lover, at that period, I certainly never once thought of him ; nor do I think that he had then any idea of me in that light ; at least if he had he never showed it. It was not till after I had been a week or two at Ardennan that the notion began to dawn upon my mind. At first I was deeply concerned. The idea of love or marriage was utterly repugnant to me, and I was truly grieved at the thought of causing pain to a man whom I had learned

to esteem more highly than any man I ever knew. Never, Caroline—never by the lightest thought, did I so far wrong Malcolm Gordon as to imagine that it was my wealth he sought. While I felt exalted in my own opinion by the honour of his regard, I felt in another sense humbled also ; for I was deeply conscious how unworthy I was of it. Then too, Caroline, I felt that I could not bear to make him unhappy. Suddenly it came into my head, that it would be noble and generous to sacrifice my own feelings. As I could never be happy myself, why should I neglect an opportunity of bestowing happiness on another. As soon as this idea had taken possession of me, it seemed day by day to gather strength. I had a sort of melancholy satisfaction in dwelling upon it. I began now even to venture to cast a glance upon my future. It seemed to me that if happiness was not to be mine, I might at least find rest and safety as the wife of Malcolm. If I should determine upon a single life, what lay before me but long, long years of solitary restlessness. As a wife I should have a home, a family

circle, and in the end perhaps peace and even content. Such were the reasons which decided me. Occasionally I had misgivings about the wisdom of my conduct, doubts as to the possibility of obtaining now peace anywhere on earth ; but I never even for a moment swerved from my resolution, after I had given Mr. Gordon reason to believe that I favoured his suit. Although I was at first almost driven to distraction by the presence of Arthur Cornish in the very house where I was an inmate, in the end I was more confirmed than ever in my determination to marry Mr. Gordon. It seemed to me that Arthur had come for the very purpose of insulting me, of showing me, by his supercilious unconcerned manners, and his devoted attentions to other women, that he despised my anger, and had completely forgotten my love. Now I know that this was not the case, that he has loved me alone, me throughout ; that it was for my sake he came to the highlands."

"But why, then," interrupted Caroline, "has he made no effort to repossess himself of your affection? Why has he

looked on, apparently unmoved, and beheld you almost snatched from him by another? By your own account, Violet, it is the mere effect of accident that you are not Malcolm's wife."

"Arthur is too proud to sue where he has been once repulsed. He sought to provoke my jealousy, that he might thus discover if I still loved him."

"And was this right, Violet?" cried Caroline, warmly, almost indignantly. "Oh, was this right?"

Violet coloured, and returned no answer. Caroline looked at her sorrowfully. She continued, "I intended to have told Mr. Gordon all; indeed, I had already given him to understand that it was not in my power to feel for him the ardour of a first attachment. To-day I meant to have, in general terms at least, explained everything to him, told him what I could feel, what I hoped to be able to do for him in case I became his wife, and then to have left it to him to decide. In my anger and indignation, and while I believed that the power to love had been consumed by the fire of my first passion,

I imagined that that passion itself was also in ashes. It was not till I thought that Arthur was dead, till I found myself hurried on, I knew not how, by feelings over which I seemed to have no control—nay, which I never seemed so much as to think of opposing, and which, in one instant of irresistible power, swept away alike the resolutions of years, the dictates of reason and rectitude, nay, the very promptings of womanly pride and maidenly propriety—that I knew that my love was lasting as life and strong as death. For a minute or two I was sensible of nothing but the joy of knowing that Arthur lived. But suddenly my senses seemed to return, my eyes were open to the situation in which I had placed myself. I saw, as in one glance, all the folly and the falsehood and the cruelty of which I had been guilty. Never in all my life, not even on that fatal day on which I first beheld Eglantine, have I been so utterly miserable as at that moment. Spare me, Caroline, from dwelling upon it.

“You saw that I returned to Ardenнан with William Ross. As soon as I arrived

here, I hastened to my own room, which I have not quitted since. Such an afternoon as I passed, Caroline! and such a night! At about eight or nine o'clock, I think it must have been, I received a note by a messenger from Corriebeg. After years of silence, a note from Arthur Cornish to me once more! I thought I should have gone mad. I had been nearly distracted with the idea that he despised me, and triumphed in my humiliation. Now the revulsion of my feelings was so great, that I was not able to read the letter. It seemed that whatever it contained—anger, or contempt, or love—must kill me. My eyes were dazzled and my head swam, so that I could not read. At last, however, I made it out. Here it is, Caroline; read it, I wish you to know all.”

Caroline took the letter. The handwriting of Arthur Cornish was generally symmetrical, yet dark, bold, and free, and seemed to bespeak, in no small degree, the character of the writer. The note in question looked as if it had been written in a fury; as if the contents had

been poured out so fast from the soul of the penman, that while the pen had flown to express them, it had also been inspired with the passion of the writer, and by its wild dashes and vehement back strokes, kept time to his fiery feelings. Caroline read :

“Violet,—You love me still. What I have longed for years, what I have sought for months to discover, I have discovered at last. You love me ; and Violet, I worship you. All your coldness, all your unforgiving pride, has not rendered you less dear to me than when we wandered together, with but one heart between us, amid the woods of Harbury. Had you ceased to love me, Violet,—had you not shown, beyond all possibility of mistake, that you do love me, after what has passed, rather than I should again have humbled myself before you, or sued again for pardon,—rather than have uttered another word of contrition, I would have cut out my tongue ; or, with an unmoved countenance, beheld you the wife of another man. But you love me, Violet, and therefore I entreat you to forgive me ;

I implore you to cast me not off again to recklessness and despair. You said once, that you would not be my wife to become the plaything of an hour. You cannot say so now, Violet ; you cannot wrong me now by so unjust a fear. I have been constant to you through four long, hopeless years ; constant under circumstances in which, I truly believe, no other man living would have been constant. Surely I have been sufficiently tried, sufficiently punished. Violet, I beseech you, have mercy on us both, and condemn not two people who love, to eternal separation. Surely, Violet, you will not force yourself to marry a man who does not love you as I love you, and whom you love not at all. Write to me, Violet, I beseech you ; write quickly, and tell me that I may once again call you mine, as I am yours.

“ARTHUR CORNISH.”

“Have you answered this ?” inquired Caroline, as soon as she had finished reading.

“Not yet. I could not last night, and all this morning I have been busy writing

to Mr. Gordon." As she spoke, she lifted the sealed packet, which Caroline had observed on her entrance, and handing it to her, continued in a saddened tone: "You will give it to him, Caroline. It contains the substance of what I have been telling you. Carry, is he very angry? Do you think he will soon get over it?"

"Malcolm is not angry," replied Caroline, trembling and colouring, and with a slight haughtiness of tone. "He is too good and noble to be *angry*. It was at his request, nay, entreaty, though that was not needed, that I came here to-day. And as to getting over it, he will try, I am sure; but though he says nothing, I fear, I know he is in great distress."

Violet hid her face in her hands; but when she looked up it was to say, "Yet Arthur is right, Caroline. Great and good though Malcolm is, he does not love me as Arthur loves."

"No," answered Caroline, with sparkling eyes and a heightened colour, "No, not as *Arthur* loves. He loves you far

more truly, far more unselfishly, but he has far more self-command, far higher principle ; and, were his feelings ten times more powerful than Arthur's, he would not submit to be conquered and driven by them as Arthur is by his.' Then more softly and sorrowfully she added "Oh, Violet ! are you really going to marry this proud, selfish, violent man ?"

Violet started. "Take care, Caroline I will bear much from you, but not everything."

"Forgive me, Violet ; but, indeed, indeed, I speak out of friendship for you, dear Violet. I know I am younger and less experienced than you, but in the present case I am sure my judgment is truer and my sight clearer. From all I know of Arthur Cornish, from all I have seen myself, from your own showing, I am certain there can be nothing self-denying or generous in any love he can feel. He has been constant, but are you certain that pride has not helped to make him so ? Do you think that his is a love which will do much, or suffer anything ? Can it be your support

in sickness? your consolation in sorrow? your strength in trial? your light in darkness? Oh, Violet! when you are old and faded, will it bestow upon you a beauty such as your youth never had? Oh, Violet! will it do any, the least of all this? Dear, dear Violet! think it is for the happiness of all your life, and, perhaps, for the happiness beyond this life—for eternity.” And the young girl spoke with a hushed solemnity.

Violet sat for some minutes with her face concealed. At last she looked up, and said gratefully, but firmly, “I thank you, Caroline, sincerely, for I know you mean most kindly; but in speaking thus you only make me miserable. I know, that in taking this step, if I fail of happiness, certain misery is my portion. But even that, it seems to me, would be preferable to the state of negative wretchedness I now endure. I have decided irrevocably; Arthur Cornish is my destiny. It must be fulfilled.”

Caroline saw that reply was useless. She looked mournfully at her friend, and

was rising to take leave, when the latter prevented her.

“Stay till I have written a note, Caroline, for I wish you to read it. Caroline sat down again, and in about five minutes the note was written and in her hands. These were its contents :

“You are right, Arthur. I love you still, beyond all worlds. Come, then ; come when you please, my beloved Arthur. Let us forgive one another, or rather let forgiveness never be mentioned between us. Loving the same as we did long ago, let the past be forgotten for ever. Let us remember only that you are mine and I am yours for ever. VIOLET.”

Without speaking, Caroline returned the letter to Violet. The latter opened her arms, and pressed Caroline to her heart.

“Now, may God bless you, my kind Caroline ! It is all over now. We will never speak of these things again ; but we will still be friends.”

Caroline assented by a silent pressure, for her heart was too heavy for speech, and they parted.

CHAPTER II.

As Caroline was hastening down stairs, she met Isabella Ross. "Oh Caroline!" cried the latter; "it is you. What a time you have been with Violet. How is she?"

"Pretty well," Caroline answered, and would have passed on, but Isabella entreated her to come into her room "for a minute—just a minute," as she "had something very particular to say."

As soon as they had arrived there, she began: "This is a very strange, mysterious business, don't you think? Nobody has seen Violet to-day but yourself, and indeed I don't wonder that she is ashamed to show her face after her conduct yesterday. It seems Mr. Cornish has written to her

since. Betsey told me that James gave Ellen her maid a letter to take up to her last night, and that it came from Corriebeg. It is really very unaccountable conduct and we all thought she was engaged to Mr. Gordon. She must be a dreadful flirt and jilt if she means to refuse him after all, and Arthur Cornish no better for that matter. What can it mean?"

And Isabella looked inquiringly at Caroline. Caroline like some straightforward and earnest persons, had a habit of answering to what people meant rather than to what they said. She now replied "If you wish to know, Isabella, what has passed between Violet and myself in the interview which we have just had, I am sorry to say it is quite out of my power to gratify you. Surely I need not tell you that whatever Violet has told me has been in confidence, or that such being the case I shall be faithful."

"Oh yes! of course," Isabella answered, disappointedly, "I should not certainly wish any one to break a promise, but without doing that, could you not—it is not from idle curiosity I wish to know."

And Isabella spoke nearly, if not quite, the truth. She had, it was true, a fair share of idle curiosity, and was, moreover, like most idle-minded persons, inordinately fond of gossip, but she had also an affectionate disposition, and to do her justice, this was in the present instance the main cause of her anxiety for intelligence. But she shall explain herself.

“The truth is, Caroline,” she continued, in a mysterious tone, and amid all her genuine concern, with a certain relish of the gossip, “but mind you must never tell, we have had the most dreadful night that ever was with poor Maria. Mamma and I have both been up with her all night, and she has been going out of one fit of hysterics into another, and crying quite like a distracted person. And I must say, after all Mr. Cornish’s devoted attention to her, which I am sure, Caroline, you must have noticed, he has behaved most abominably if he has been in love with Violet all this time. Mamma thinks so too, and she is quite disappointed, for as she said, in her way you know, that he was such a good-looking

young man, and seemed so steady and was so well off, and he and Maria seemed to get on so well together, that she thought he was just the young man for her. And Willie is very angry, and papa I know, will be much disappointed, as I am pretty sure he had set his heart on the match ; to be sure it would have been a good match for Maria, not but what she may look to as good a one. But I am sure if things are as we have some cause to fear, I do not know how she will ever get over it, for Maria is one of those people that don't get over things. You have not the least notion how ill she is, and I thought perhaps you might be able to tell me something that could be some comfort to her."

As Isabella finished speaking, her lip trembled, and her eye glistened with regretful feeling. Caroline was truly concerned. She could partly estimate poor Maria's wretchedness — partly guess, as she remembered how elate she had seemed on the preceding day with love and pride, what must have been the downfall of her high hopes, what must now be the

bitterness of her disappointment. After a moment's consideration, she answered with affectionate sympathy, "I feel most deeply for her, dear Isabella, and quite agree with you in thinking that Mr. Cornish has behaved very ill. So much I think I may tell you for Maria's sake, who had better, I think, know the worst as soon as possible; there is no hope for her, none at all."

"None at all?" echoed Isabella, with a fallen countenance, as if she had yet cherished a lingering ray of the flattering light.

"No, not the very slightest," Caroline answered with tears in her eyes.

"Poor, poor Maria!" sobbed her sister. As Caroline rose to depart, she added in a subdued tone; "I shall go down to the door with you, dear Caroline, just to get a breath of fresh air, before I consult with mamma about breaking this to Maria."

Then taking Caroline's arm, she relapsed into a melancholy, gossiping chatter about how Mr. Cornish had said this, and how Maria had done that, and how they had

all thought, and how she had remarked to Willie, and how Willie had said to her which lasted all the way down-stairs, and was prolonged by a pause in the hall and another on the door-steps.

"How differently," thought Caroline "some minds are constituted from other minds !"

All the way home, Caroline pondered upon the strange incidents and revelations of the morning ; but chiefly her mind was occupied with the new view she had obtained of the character of Violet Smythe with all its strange mixtures and inconsistencies, its resolution and its weakness, its native nobility and truthfulness so strangely perverted, its warmth and generosity so often misdirected, its fine impulses without one steady motive to guide them, and its passionate affection so fatally bestowed. Poor Maria, too. And Caroline began to muse over the strange mystery of love as it is variously experienced and manifested by different persons. *She* too loved, as truly and devotedly, she was certain, as either Violet or Maria ; her love besides seemed a

hopeless as that of the latter; yet she was not in hysterics, and her despairing moments had been very few. She felt that she could live and die for Malcolm Gordon. But instead of weakening her and unfitting her for life and its duties, her love, hopeless though it was, seemed to nerve and uphold her in all. To be like Malcolm, to be worthy of Malcolm, to act as he would approve or admire, that was her love. Why were their feelings so different from hers? At first she could not divine it at all; but at last she thought she had accounted for it by the fact that they loved a bad man, while she loved a good one. And she was partly right. The heart naturally reflects the image of that which it loves. The love of the good, ever quickens the germ of whatever good quality we may ourselves possess. And it was Malcolm's goodness, his magnanimity, kindness, forbearance, his enlightened views, and enlarged mind; it was these qualities, not abstractedly of course, but personified in the individual Malcolm, with his pleasant manners and manly countenance, which

had won Caroline's love. Caroline's love, young as she was, was no girlish fancy, or sickly sentimentalism, no specious egotism, or idolatrous passion ; it was the true, unselfish love of that which was worthy of being loved,—and, moreover, it was no love of a mere creation of her own imagination, but of a reality. The only true and lasting love is that which tends to improve : all other must either die away as a thing that has no root, or be consumed in bitter disappointment. Love,—like every affection of man, like all things in this globe, may I not with humility venture to say like all things throughout the whole Universe of God, that contains not within its elements this power of improvement, and this tendency to produce something of nobler growth, must fade and fall. It is the law of the Eternal ! and human love must conform to its universal requirements, or, like any other worthless thing, perish everlastingly.

Caroline met Malcolm on the stairs, as she was ascending to her own room, after her return to Locharroch. She gave him

Violet's letter. He took it in silence, and without looking at it. He seemed to have an instinctive knowledge from whom it came. Without one word, she then passed on. It was still more than an hour till dinner-time. Caroline did not wish to see Catherine alone just at that time, and she feared that if she went down to the drawing-room she should find her there. She, therefore, wrapped a shawl round her, and sat down in the cold. She felt fatigued and out of spirits. At last, after a considerable time, it struck her that she would go to the library, and wait there till the dinner-bell rang. There was always a fire in the morning in the library, in case any member of the family might wish to read or write; and she imagined that even if it had been allowed to go out, the apartment would still be much warmer than her own room, where the fire was not lighted till the evening. The library looked to the east, and there was a row of beech-trees straight in front, and at no great distance from the windows. It was, therefore, never a very light room at any time; and now, when Caroline entered it,

in the dusk of a winter afternoon, it was almost dark. There was scarcely an appearance of red in the handful of ashes still left in the grate, and all the light there was in the apartment was afforded solely by the reflection from the snow on the outside. Between the two windows, which had deep embrasures, and consequently in the darkest part of the room, there was a sort of divan, with a soft back, which was Caroline's favourite seat, and on which she now meant to luxuriate. She was close beside it, and on the point of sitting down, ere she became aware that it had already one occupant.

"I beg pardon," she cried, with a start of surprise.

"It is you, Caroline," said the voice of Malcolm Gordon; "I could not make you out till you spoke."

"I did not know you were here," she said, "or I should not——"

"Should not?" he repeated, interrogatively.

"I should not have intruded, I was going to say."

"You do not intrude, my dear girl, I

can assure you. Unless you wish to be alone, you will gratify me by remaining. You were coming to sit here. There is plenty of room for two."

Caroline sat down beside him. Though his voice had been perfectly firm, there was something sad in the tone—and all the more so from the sadness seeming quite involuntary—which went to her very heart. She would have given worlds to have been able to offer him some comfort. She wished, at least, to say something kind; but she knew not how to begin. She felt inexpressibly awkward as well as sad. After a short pause, however, he opened the way himself:

"I am glad you have come, Caroline. While we are alone, I wish to thank you for your kindness. It is a subject upon which you may easily believe it is painful for me to say much; but I am very grateful both for your sympathy and the trouble you have taken."

"Oh! do not speak of it, Malcolm. I have done very, — very little. If I could do more, — anything, — anything in the world!"

“Thank you, dear, kind Caroline.”
Then, after a short pause : “You saw her, Caroline ? Did she tell you all ?”

“Yes, everything, I believe.”

“And you pity her ? You do not think she has been mean or dishonourable in intent ?”

“No, I am sure she has not. I am sure, were it possible, she would repair the harm she has done at any cost. I blamed her greatly at first ; I think still she acted a very mistaken part in ever,—in ever,—but, oh ! I pity her now far more than anything else.”

“Your feelings and views, Caroline, resemble my own. Yesterday I was horror-struck at what seemed the perfidy of her conduct ; though even then I could not believe that there was no way of explaining it. It has been inexpressibly painful to me to hear Catherine speak of her as she did both last night and to-day. It was not that she scolded or said much, for Catherine never does that ; but one or two such bitter words, such harsh epithets, and it is in vain to attempt to soften her. She would not hear of there being a pos-

sibility that any extenuation of her conduct could be offered. In short, with the warmest feelings towards me,—indeed, on account of that warmth of feeling, and the resentment it never fails to create against any one whom she thinks has injured me,—she has added, in no small degree, to my distress. But, Caroline, since we are speaking on this painful subject, can *you* tell me,—for, of course, *she* does not,—if she means to marry that,—that selfish scoundrel ?”

And Malcolm spoke with a bitterness so foreign to all that Caroline had hitherto seen of his character, that she felt almost frightened. She answered :

“ I fear she does ; indeed, I *know* she does.”

Malcolm was silent for a second or two ; but Caroline could hear that he breathed hard, and she fancied she perceived that his hand was clenched. Then he muttered something between his teeth, and springing from his seat, as if from some sudden sensation of agony too great to be borne, and apparently quite forgetful of Caroline's presence, he exclaimed aloud :

“ Unhappy, infatuated woman ! Oh Violet,—Violet ! ”

Greatly alarmed and distressed by this unexpected paroxysm, Caroline instinctively rose, and laying her hand on his arm, said gently :

“ Malcolm,—dear Malcolm ! ”

He became instantly composed, and taking her hand, again sat down. As he did so, a burning drop fell upon the hand he held. It made her heart ache for the woe which had drawn it forth. She was yet hesitating what she should say, whether she should speak at all, when he said :

“ Forgive me, Caroline, for having thus intruded my sorrows upon you. Kind and sensible as you are, you are too young perfectly to understand such things ; and may you be spared for ever the knowledge of the misery caused by an unrequited, hopeless attachment ! ”

Caroline was deeply moved, and her emotion was mingled with a strange mortification. She who loved him far better than her life,—who loved him so dearly that her very soul was pierced with his

grief for the loss of another woman ; whose whole fond heart yearned towards him at that moment as if it would break with the burden of its unsought love,—to be told that she could not understand such things,—that she was too young to love. Poor Caroline ! worn out, harassed, distressed by the various events of the day, she could bear up no longer, but burst into a fit of low, passionate weeping. Malcolm was in a reverie, and did not at first notice her distress. At last, however, he became aware that she was trembling violently ; and then, as he listened, he heard her faint, smothered sobs.

“ Caroline ! ” he cried, much surprised and affected, “ my dear girl,—my sweet child, what has distressed you thus ? ” Then drawing her towards him with almost a mother’s tenderness, strangely unlike the violence he had displayed only a few minutes before, he continued soothingly : “ I knew what a dear, good heart it had, but I did not know that it was such a sensitive, nervous thing before.”

“ I am so tired, and have been so much excited,” sobbed out Caroline.

“ So you have, and on my account, and I have been only thinking of myself all this time, my dear, kind Caroline. How selfish I have been !”

And Malcolm spoke the truth. He had been so absorbed by his own cares and griefs, that, except in connection with them, he had not thought of Caroline at all. There is often a kind of selfishness in great sorrow, as in all engrossing passions. Yet, strange to say, her distress seemed to do him good. It diverted his thoughts from himself, while he was sincerely touched by her affectionate sympathy, little suspecting the deeper cause of her emotion.

“ You cannot think what a comfort you are to me, Caroline. I shall remember your goodness all my life, my dear young sister.”

As Malcolm spoke he pressed his arm more tightly round Caroline, and held her more closely to his side with a gentle affectionateness. Caroline felt at that moment as if she should have liked to have died thus, while she could yet feel his heart beat against her bosom. The com-

bined bliss and sorrow of the moment contributed to make her weep on.

“ Oh !” she wildly thought, “ if she might only have wept there evermore !” Then she began to wonder what Malcolm would think if he knew her feelings ; whether he would be shocked or grieved ; whether he would despise her or pity her ; or whether, perchance, it might comfort him in his own grief to know, that as devotedly and hopelessly as he loved one woman, he was beloved by another. He would not think her a child then. He would know then that she was a woman, because she loved with a woman’s love. But he was speaking again, in a more cheerful tone than she had yet heard him :

“ We must dismiss all these painful subjects for the future, Caroline. It is all past, and over, now and for ever ! To-morrow I shall commence a regular system of oblivion,” (as he spoke he suppressed a sigh) ; “ and you shall help me, will you not, dear Caroline, like a good little sister ? We shall have some regular study or employment. As you are fond of learning

I know, I shall teach you something some language, if you like."

"I shall like it exceedingly," cried Caroline, drying her tears, and catching his spirit.

"Then we shall have something interesting to talk about. I shall believe more entirely that you are my sister. You have never told me yet, Caroline, that you will have me for a brother. Will you?"

"Yes," she answered, faintly. At that instant the dinner-bell rang. "Oh!" cried Caroline, "they will see that I have been crying."

"You need not be afraid, I think Catherine's mind is otherwise occupied. John, even if he does see, will make no remark, and probably not even indulge in a conjecture; the children will be too busy eating their dinner; and the tutor, you know, never does notice anything."

As Malcolm spoke he rose, and offered his arm to Caroline. And thus they went down together to the dining-room.

The staircase and passage were lighted only by one oil lamp. The wind had risen

it seemed to be blowing fresh; the blast was sweeping mournfully round the house. As Caroline walked down-stairs in the vague uncertain light, long flickering shadows around her on every side, and listening to the wild wailing music of the mountain wind, there came over her suddenly a strange sense of the unreality of all things. For a moment she seemed to be filled with a sense of the fleeting vanity of life,—to feel with intense conviction that man also “fleeth as a shadow and continueth not.” A feeling at once weary, sweet, and sad, seemed to take possession of her, when a slight, involuntary pressure of her companion’s arm recalled her from the waking reverie into which she had fallen. She felt no longer as one that walketh in a dream. The glance of Malcolm’s eye brought back the vivid consciousness of reality,—for what was so intensely real as the love she felt for him? Brief and unimportant as a moment before the events or the happiness of this little, shadowy hour had seemed to her, now again she owned the might of the feeling that lay deepest and quickest in her heart;

and in an instant her thoughts were a busy with the hopes and contingencies of this life, as if she had not, almost at that very same minute, fully recognised all their emptiness. What might not happen in time? A hope seemed faintly to dawn on the distant future, so beautiful that she hardly dared to contemplate it; and yet so dear to her heart, that though she would not permit her imagination to give it shape and distinctness, yet she could not entirely relinquish it. Inconsistent Caroline! But are we not all thus at times inconsistent? Are there not moments when a touch, a breath, a glance, a whisper, a mere passing smile or frown on Nature's face, will suffice to change the whole current of our thoughts? At such seasons, one could almost ask with Coleridge:

“ And what if all of animated Nature
Be but organic harps diversely framed,
That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps,
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
At once the soul of each and God of all?”

But these are things beyond our ken and, as the same great poet immediately acknowledges, things which we have no

right to conjecture about or define; for they belong to "The Incomprehensible!" I would only plead that my Caroline may not be thought of more changeful mood than the rest of her kind; for she was, indeed, of a most constant nature.

The dinner that day at Locharroch was the very dullest imaginable. Catherine was silent and grim. Although not in the least displeased with any person then present, but, on the contrary, full of affection towards all, she spoke to every one in tones so short and severe, that a person unacquainted with her would have thought that she was offended with every individual member of the party. Malcolm and Caroline were silent. Locharroch was always silent; the tutor never spoke at any time, unless he was spoken to; and the very children seemed to be aware that something was wrong, and ate their dinner in unusual quietness. In the evening it was still worse,—worse even than the night before. Catherine worked as if for a wager, never once raising her eyes, and driving through her needle with an energy and rapidity truly amazing. No sister

was ever more sincerely attached to her brother than Catherine was to Malcolm, but the very warmth of her attachment made her act as if she were angry, rather than as if she sympathised with him. The idea of comforting him, or of repressing for his sake, the indignation she felt, never once entered into her head. She never doubted that, in being thus silent and disagreeable, she was acting the part of a model sister. Caroline, meanwhile, guessed the effect this dolefulness and crossness—for she could call it nothing else,—must have on Malcolm's spirits, from the effect it had upon her own. At last she ventured to interrupt the dismal silence by hinting a proposal to play upon the piano. Catherine made no answer, but merely looked up with a glance which seemed to ask, how any one could presume to think of playing on the piano. Malcolm was in a reverie, and took no notice at the time of Caroline's kindly-meant hint. At last, however, after about five minutes' silence which, after her own unanswered speech, had seemed to Caroline more profound than ever, he suddenly became aware that

she had been speaking, and, with a little effort, recollected what she had said. Divining at once her kind intention, he roused himself to say :

“ You were speaking of music, I think, Caroline ; let us have some, by all means.”

As he spoke he opened the piano, and she played and sang till the servants came in for prayers. Whether Malcolm listened or not she could not tell ; but it was better, at all events, than that dreadful silence.

CHAPTER III.

MALCOLM GORDON was a man who always, or at least with few exceptions put in execution his good intentions. Accordingly the very next morning, with an attempt at a smile, which nearly made Caroline weep, he reminded her of her promise to become either his pupil or the companion of his studies. But Caroline did not require to be reminded. She was only too glad he had not forgotten.

As soon as they were quietly seated at the library-table, he inquired, — “Now what should you like to learn?”

“I must first know what you can teach?” Caroline answered, simply.

As she spoke, there was for a single

instant a return of the humourous twitch at the corners of the mouth she had so often noticed in Malcolm, with its usual concomitant, a brightening of the eye, at once kind and mirthful—a brightening which had now the effect of a momentary sungleam on a sombre winter's day. Instantaneously the smile passed, but it did Caroline's heart good; for though brief as an electric flash, it was genuine, and unlike the melancholy mockery of a few minutes before. He replied, with a faint sigh,—

“A very just answer, Carry. Perhaps it may be found, on closer inquiry, that I can teach you nothing you do not already know. Shall it be a language or a science?”

Caroline considered for a minute or two. Ere she answered, Malcolm again spoke, and again with a faint, evanescent smile, which seemed as before to merge in a sigh,—

“I admire my own modesty, Caroline, in speaking as if I were a *savant* and a philologist, when in reality there is hardly a department either in science or literature

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with which I am anything approaching familiarly acquainted. I am one of those persons who have dabbled in many things and mastered none."

Caroline looked doubtfully at him. Affected modesty was as unlike Malcolm as the inconstant trifling he seemed to ascribe to himself.

"I see you hardly believe me, Caroline. Nevertheless, I speak the plain truth. You must not suppose, however, that I have had no purpose in my desultory studies."

"What has been your purpose?" inquired Caroline, so much interested in the conversation, that she forgot her chief aim had been to interest Malcolm.

"I was intended for the army, you know, Caroline; and with the military enthusiasm of nineteen, I imagined it the noblest of professions, and myself a hero in prospective. My favourite pursuits, too, had hitherto been all of an active nature, and the hardihood of my frame, as well as my boyish ardour, led me to suppose that nature had destined me for a soldier. Now I am quite convinced that

I was deceived with regard to my own tastes. With all its drudgery, and its worst drawback of expatriation, I do not think I could have chosen, upon the whole, a more congenial profession than that which circumstances forced upon me; for if nature did not intend me for a soldier, neither did she mean me for a student. My disposition is too social for that. My sympathies have always been stronger in favour of realities than abstractions; I have no bias towards any particular line of study, and though all interest me more or less, it is not so much for their own sakes, as for the manner in which they bear upon the characters of societies and individuals. When I got to India, I found myself in a new world. All my old notions of what was admirable and praiseworthy, seemed controverted here. To use a vulgar phrase, my ideas were completely turned upside-down. I knew not what to think. I could not believe I had been altogether wrong before, nor yet that I had been altogether right. Puzzling and thinking, together with a good deal of leisure, which could not be

actively employed, drove me to reading. I had read, indeed, and studied before, but merely for amusement or for college honours. Now I read to be able to form my opinions. In books I discovered the same wonderful diversity of dogmas which had puzzled me in society; while I found everybody extolling his own branch of knowledge or wisdom as the most valuable. For the cure, also, of existing evils, I found that every philosopher and philanthropist had his favourite nostrum. One day a plausible train of argument would seem to bring irresistible conviction. The very next day another train of argument would seem, in the clearest manner, to controvert that of the preceding; while a third would incontestibly prove both to be wrong. In religion, morals, government, everything, it was the same. Though a little amused sometimes, I was much perplexed, and not a little distressed. At last I made up my mind that, as far as possible, I would endeavour to obtain a bird's-eye glance of the opinions of those who, in various times and countries, had been considered the wisest and the best,

thinking that thus I might perhaps be enabled to form an opinion for myself. With the same view, I determined also to listen to what the different sects and parties around me had to say in defence of their doctrines, to judge by what they said themselves, and not by what was said of them by others. I wished also, as far as possible, to be able to contemplate things in general, from the various points of view in which they must be seen by persons of different tastes, occupied by different studies and pursuits, their habits and feelings modified by different climates, times, and customs. In short, I wished, as far as it was possible, for an erring, imperfect, purblind mortal, to have a feeling of brotherhood with all classes of men, as it appeared to me that in this way only could I obtain that view of things as a whole, which I longed for, and which seemed essential, not only for the discovery of the truth I sought, but for its application when found. This is the purpose I have had, Caroline, in the somewhat desultory and superficial studies in which I have engaged."

“And what has been the result, may I ask?”

“Certainly you may, and you shall hear as well as I can tell you. For a time, after I ceased to be always of the opinion of the last plausible speaker, that is, when I had so often changed, that I could not help being aware of my own impressibility, and suspecting that I might not yet have reached an ultimate conclusion, my opinions seemed in a state of chaos. I knew not what to think or believe. The various creeds and doctrines, theories and systems, seemed only to have annihilated one another.”

“You must have been very uncomfortable.”

“Yes, for a time; but at last two points of light began to be evolved from this chaos; these are, a firm trust in the unerring wisdom of Divine Providence, and the necessity of a constant interchange of active benevolence. I truly and firmly believe that there is more efficacy in one instance of trustful endurance,—I do not mean proud stoicism, in one just or really generous *deed*, or even in one

act of thoughtful and faithful endeavour, than in all the theories that ever were imagined. Liberty, indeed, that liberty which consists in obedience to laws made for the benefit equally of all, is indeed a glorious thing, and absolutely necessary for the permanent growth of any good. But this attained, there is nothing in all the machinery of utilitarianism that will do anything to promote true happiness, that is, faith, self-respect, self-denial, and mutual good-will. Neither, it seems to me, will the diffusion of knowledge, or what is called taste, of *themselves*; for though all these are good and desirable as adjuncts and secondary means of happiness, they are effects rather than causes. It is at the *heart* of human nature that we must begin our work,—at our own hearts first, and through what they teach us at the hearts of others; and thus the circle of goodness will widen as it spreads. It is in the soil of kindness, and in the atmosphere of sympathy alone, that any good thing, even things which at first sight seem to have no connection with either, will take root or flourish. Were I only settled at home, I should try to do

something to cure the poverty, and wretchedness, and ignorance, by which we are surrounded ; and I should start from the vantage-ground of being one of themselves. They would listen to a Gordon, when they would not to a stranger ; and then I not only understand, but sympathise in their prejudices. Ardennan, dear Ardennan !”

Here Malcolm broke off with a writhe and a groan, as if in sudden pain. He seemed, for the time, to have forgotten Caroline’s presence. He sat still, with his lips pressed together, and his hands firmly doubled, as if he strove to endure and to overcome some suffering, either mental or bodily. Perchance he was thinking of his inheritance passed away,—his bride lost,—his hopes of a home among his own people dashed to the earth, and the long years of solitary exile which yet awaited him.

At last, however, his countenance relaxed, and he said, in a subdued tone,—“I ought to entreat your pardon, Caroline, for making so long an harangue. But I had got upon my ‘hobby,’ as it is called, and for a little it made me forget

not only you, but myself. And our studies, Caroline, we shall make but slow progress, if we are to digress in this way. We have not even determined upon the subject of them yet. Shall I teach you Greek, or Arabic, or Persian? Latin, I am afraid, I have almost forgotten."

"Greek, Arabic, Persian!" exclaimed Caroline. "Greek seems dreadfully learned; but Arabic and Persian sound quite uncommon and romantic. I should be much tempted by either of these, if I could go on with my studies at home; but that seems hardly possible. I have often wished to study German; could you teach me German?"

"Unfortunately I do not understand German. My acquaintance with the products of the German mind is only through translations. But," he continued, as if struck by a new idea, "why should we not study German together? That might, perhaps, be the best plan. Have you any objection?"

Caroline was delighted. Malcolm had a few books, as he had thought of studying it once before, and they resolved to send to

Edinburgh immediately for any more that might be necessary. They were to begin the next day.

After luncheon, in company with the children, they took a walk. Malcolm romped and played with his little nephews as usual ; but Caroline saw that his mirth was forced, and that his thoughts seemed often far away. The boys, too, appeared to remark his abstraction. On one occasion, Johnnie, the elder of the two, not meeting with the usual prompt attention to a question he had put to his uncle, sidled up to Caroline, and whispered,—

“ Do you think uncle Malcolm is angry with me, aunt Carry ? ”

This evening was not quite so dull as the last. Catherine spoke a little, Caroline played upon the piano, and Malcolm seemed to know one air from another, and even asked for some of his favourites. Things were improving.

They had just finished their German lesson the next day, and Malcolm had left the library, when a letter was brought to Caroline from Violet Smythe. It was a note to say farewell,—short, but affection-

ate. She was to set out for London the following day, and to be married in a few weeks. She promised to write to Caroline as soon after her marriage as possible, and concluded by entreating the latter to continue the correspondence. Although she had mentioned her marriage, she did not once allude to Arthur Cornish throughout the whole letter. Caroline met Malcolm on the stairs shortly afterwards. He seemed to know she had had a letter, for he asked in a quiet, firm, tone,—

“When does Miss Smythe leave Ardennan?”

“To-morrow.”

He said no more, but passed on with an unchanged countenance.

A few days afterwards, they heard the Rosses intended to leave Ardennan for the present. On some one happening to mention this piece of news in Locharroch’s presence, he remarked quietly from behind the *Times*,—

“Catherine, you must call on the ladies before they go.”

Locharroch’s wishes were, at all times, laws; and the following day proving fine,

Mrs. Gordon ordered the carriage to be got ready,—and in a severe tone of voice asked Caroline if she wished to accompany her. Caroline said she did; and they set off together. Malcolm had disappeared somewhere or other, previous to their setting out. Not one word did Catherine speak the whole way. Caroline guessed from her sternness, and disagreeableness that she was feeling deeply. As they drove in at the gates, at the entrance of the Ardennan grounds, Caroline thought she saw a tear in Mrs. Gordon's eye,—and she knew well how strong her sufferings must have been, ere she would have exhibited this proof of weakness. Considerably affected, the young girl involuntarily laid her hand kindly upon her sister's arm. But the latter shook it off almost angrily,—saying in a sort of soliloquy, and in a tone of such mingled bitterness and pride, that Caroline was both surprised and shocked,—

“To think that she should have made even Ardennan a place of pain!” Then turning to Caroline, she continued, her eyes full of an expression of wrath, deep and

strong rather than vehement; "He cannot bear to look upon the home of his fathers, and all for *her*!"

Catherine spoke these last words with her teeth set together, while a whole vocabulary of epithets of scorn and indignation seemed comprised in the monosyllable "*her*." Caroline, too, had been thinking of Malcolm, and of the painful associations he must now have with the early home which was still so dear to him; but, dearly as she loved Malcolm, she could not sympathise in Catherine's present feelings. They rather served to turn for the present her sympathies in a different channel.

"Oh, Catherine!" she said,—"*she* has suffered as well as Malcolm. He has forgiven her, and ought not his friends to do the same?"

"Forgive her, indeed!—Caroline, I could have forgiven an injury to myself, but an injury to my brother,—and such an injury,—such an indignity as this, I cannot and *will* not forgive. And I beg Caroline you will never allude to the subject again,—you have nothing to do with it, and are far too young to meddle in such matters.

And with an air of the haughtiest determination to listen to no reply, Catherine sat back in the carriage, muttering with increased emphasis and austerity, — “Heartless jilt!”

That night as Catherine prayed (for she always officiated at family prayers), “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us,”—Caroline could not help thinking of the scene of the morning, and wondering if Mrs. Gordon did not think of it. But, to all appearance, the two ideas had never been associated or compared in her mind. Many a sun went down upon her wrath. Yet Catherine considered herself a very religious woman, and never hesitated to do what she really believed to be her duty. She was also beyond all suspicion of hypocrisy. But, like many others, she made no habit of comparing her practice with her creed. They were as things apart, while both remained in precisely the same condition into which they had long been crystallized by education and habit. And doubtless in this uninvestigating, inconsequential, stereotyped phase of mind

might, in some measure, be found a solution of that great enigma,—the amazing extent to which self-deception prevails in the world. There are not, I think many hypocrites in society, — but of self-deceivers, the name is legion.

Mrs. Gordon and Caroline were admitted on their arrival at Ardennan. They found the three ladies in the drawing-room. Mrs. Ross, and Isabella, were engaged in some kind of fancy-work; while Maria, enveloped in a sort of dressing-gown made of the softest and finest cashmere wool, and trimmed with costly fur, her glossy hair revealed rather than concealed by a small cap of French lace, reclined upon a sofa, holding in her hand a beautifully-bound volume of poetry. She was much thinner, and very pale. It was impossible to look at her, and to doubt that she had suffered keenly; but as she was now once more able to appear in society, she had evidently made up her mind to be elegant and interesting. Henceforth Maria Ross was to appear in the character of “one who had suffered,”—a character quite congenial to her taste for the tragic. She had

already written some very withering and limping verses on the text,—“men were deceivers ever;” while she was now meditating a touching sonnet, with the line for a motto,—

“Man to man so oft unkind
Is always so to woman.”

She now languidly raised herself to receive the visitors, and then sank back again on the cushions with a sigh, partly real, partly affected. Catherine darted at her a look of anger and contempt, which seemed to ask what right such a piece of affectation as she was, had to pretend to have any share in a sorrow which affected *her*. As Caroline, however, took her thin white hand, and pressed it with unaffected kindness, genuine tears started to the poor girl's eyes, and from a real impulse she hid her face for a moment. Poor Maria disappointed alike in love and ambition. Proud had been her hopes, and great was their downfall! But, a moment yielded to the expression of purely natural feelings, Maria was herself again. She rolled her large eyes with a sort of wild solemnity saying,

“ Mine has been a cruel experience—a sad, romantic destiny. But though for a brief moment I ventured to indulge in the hope of a brighter, I have always had a presentiment that thus it was to be with me. A voice has ever seemed to assure me that I was predestined to a stormy and melancholy fate. I knew I was not made for common-place happiness. There was no alternative for me between superior felicity and the misery in which I am now plunged—none.”

What could Caroline answer in reply to this doleful harangue, but that she trusted time would bring consolation. But Maria rejected the idea with scorn.

“ No, Caroline, my existence is blighted ; my affections withered—my hopes blasted for ever. I know not now that I shall die in the flower of my youth, but my life henceforth is but a branch scathed and scorched by the lightnings of destiny. But rather would I have partaken for even these few weeks of the rich full life of love, and tasted all its beauty and glory, than have stagnated on for ever in the common-place of ordinary feelings.”

Caroline endeavoured to hint at the advantage of endurance and exertion. She spoke feelingly; for her heart, without much reference to Maria, was full of what she said. But Maria would not hear her. She was evidently vain of her "blighted existence," and her "lightning-scathed destiny," and was almost angry that any one could suppose that she could ever have another hour's happiness, or had enough of energy left to think of making an exertion.

Mrs. Gordon, meanwhile, was engaged in conversation with her hostess, or rather Mrs. Ross talked and she listened. The latter, though fat and good-humoured and unaffected as ever, had evidently been distressed. The kind, homely face was not so happy and satisfied-looking as usual, and as she spoke her eyes were often turned anxiously towards Maria, and as they were turned, filled with tears. She began upon the matter next her heart at once.

"This is a bad business for us all, my dear Mrs. Gordon. It's really very kind and neighbourly of you and Miss Irvi

to have come over all this gate to see us. I would ha' been to see you if it hadna been for my poor bairn there, but my whole time's been ta'en up wi' her. Who would ha' thought o' Mr. Cornish, such a nice, civil-spoken, handsome young man behaving in that kind o' way, and Violet too, for that matter? I am sure we treated them with every kindness, and I could *not* ha' believed they would ha' been so ungrateful,—could *not* ha' believed it, my dear Mrs. Gordon. And poor Mr. Malcolm, too, poor fellow! how is *he*, then?"

Catherine winced a little at this question, and made no reply. Mrs. Ross unheedingly continued,

"I have no doubt he has a sore heart this day, for it was plain to see how fond he was about that lassie. Woe's me! its very hard on innocent young folk. And then George too, poor man, that's my husband, Mrs. Gordon, he is much put 'till't, for he was that anxious for the marriage. George, as is natural, considering what a heap o' money he has made himself, wants his daughters to marry

rich men. For my part I dinna mind if they're steady and respectable, and likely to make good husbands. I tell him often that his money wad ne'er ha' made me happy if he hadna been the man he is. And ye see he thought this Mr. Cornish the thing for Maria; but I tell him there's plenty young men as rich in Glasgow, and glad to get her, and far better nor him; for as he has turned out, she couldna ha' been happy wi' him. No, grief as it's been to us, I am glad he did not marry my dear bairn; she will get a better man yet, and as rich a one too."

"Oh, mother!" groaned out poor Maria, in real pain, "I cannot bear to hear you speak so; *I* shall never marry any one." Then, in solemn soliloquy, "No, all thoughts of love and marriage are at an end for me. My heart is crushed for ever."

Mrs. Ross continued, in a sort of whisper, and with her eyes full of tears,

"My heart is sore when I hear her that way; but for a' that I ken it'll no last. I mind when I was a lassie mysel' I was daft about a young man that keepit a

draper's shop next door to my father, and we should ha' been married, but he took up wi' a young mantua-maker. I thought I would ha' died at the time, but I didna, and or three years I was married on George. I hope Mr. Malcolm doesna take on as bad as Maria."

Catherine would not perhaps have tolerated these allusions to her brother's disappointment from any other person; but Mrs. Ross's sympathy was so evidently unfeigned, and her compassion so unmixed with any of that assumption of superiority which is so frequently associated with pity, and which is always so galling to a proud spirit, that although she would much rather the latter had not alluded to the painful subject, she was not at all offended, and took the inquiries in the spirit they were meant. Altogether, Mrs. Ross was a great favourite of Catherine's. She was so truthful and unassuming, and saw most things in so common-sense a light.

Isabella had now drawn Caroline aside into the embrasure of one of the windows, that she might give her all the gossiping

details of the sequel of Maria's illness, and of the departure of Violet Smythe, and of all she had seen or been able to gather with regard to what had passed between the latter and Arthur Cornish.

"He was here one day," she said; "but of course we kept it from Maria, or she would have gone distracted. It was just after one of her very worst fits of hysterics, too; and Violet saw him in the breakfast-parlour. They were about an hour together. After they came out, I met Violet on the stairs, and I am sure she had been crying: and they wrote to one another once every day, and sometimes twice. The morning she went away, Violet cried bitterly,—and she was not a person, you know, that was much in the habit of showing her feelings; Maria, of course, she did not see, but she kissed me, and then mamma, and said to mamma that she knew she had brought her much unhappiness, and had seemed very ungrateful. But that she was very much distressed on that account, and that if she dared tell mamma all, she would not blame her so very much. And then she said she hoped

mamma had forgiven her. And mamma said that she had, for she knew that it was her duty to forgive everybody, and that she sincerely wished her happiness. And then Violet quite sobbed, and said she was far too good, and that she was the next best person in the world to Mr. Gordon, and that she was herself a wicked, selfish creature compared with them. She said she knew that she could not have much intercourse with our family for a long time; but she hoped I would write sometimes, and that perhaps, some time or other, we might all meet again. And really both mamma and I felt very sorry for her. There can be no doubt, incomprehensible as her conduct has been, that she is very much in love, and, as mamma says, one ought to make allowances. We are all inclined to think Mr. Cornish has been most to blame. What do you think, Caroline?"

"I have no doubt at all that he has been most to blame."

"And what does Mr. Gordon say to it?" asked Isabella, in a tone which clearly betrayed a wish to pump Caroline

on the subject of Malcolm's feelings and comportment. It was always inconceivable to Isabella that any one could really wish to be silent on such topics. But Caroline was resolutely determined not to allow herself to be betrayed into gossiping on any such subject. She, therefore, answered, in a tone which forbade all further questioning, "Indeed, he says very little—nothing that I could repeat." And Isabella, finding that she could acquire no fresh gossip, as the next best thing, began again to chatter herself.

"Willie, too, poor fellow, is so much disappointed in his friend; though, I dare say, if it were not for Maria, he would soon console himself in flirting with Christiana Buchanan. Christiana is Willie's flame at present. He has always somebody, though I really do believe Ida von Carlberg was more serious than any of the rest. Willie and Maria will read more poetry and play more upon the piano than ever when they once get together again. It is a fortunate thing, Caroline, when we have only one brother, he should suit us both so well, for he likes to chat and laugh

with me just as well as to read poetry with Maria. You see I am not so clever as they are; but Willie is such a delightful creature, and I think he often likes better to tell me all his little love-affairs than Maria. He only tells her when it is something romantic, like the Countess Ida."

There is no telling how long Isabella's talk might have flowed on; but happily for my readers, who I dare say are beginning to think they have had enough of it, it was interrupted by Mrs. Gordon's bringing her somewhat painful visit to a conclusion. Under the genial influence of the friendly Mrs. Ross, Catherine's severity had considerably relaxed, and she shook hands cordially, almost affectionately, with her hostess, who was affected even to tears as she took leave of her highland friends.

"I hope I'll come over to Locharroch *or* I go away; but if I dinna, ye must jist take the will for the deed, for maybes I'll no can leave that poor lassie. And many thanks for a' yer kindness, my dear Mrs. Gordon, and I hope we'll see

one another or long. I'm sure we'd ha' had a blithe time if it hadna been for the end o't. And good-bye Miss Irvine, my dear, and I hope ye'll soon be back at Locharroch, or if ye be in Glasgow ye'll no forget Blytheswood-square; and may be Mr. Malcolm will come and see us there. Give my kindest remembrances till him and say sae."

Catherine promised she would, shaking hands coldly with Isabella, and bowing stiffly to Maria. The latter, as she languidly pressed Caroline's hand, whispered, with a deep sigh, "Tell Mr. Malcolm there is one who can feel for his blighted spirit, who knows every pang he endures."

Caroline returned no answer, for she privately determined that she would tell Malcolm nothing of the kind. She felt that his disappointment was of a sort which sought for consolation in something widely different from sentimental parade. And yet Maria had loved and suffered too, as well as Malcolm.

CHAPTER IV.

WEEKS passed away. Two months had elapsed since the fatal day at Loch Achquaigh. Malcolm was evidently in better spirits, though he had frequently fits of silence and abstraction, very unlike his former self. He did not, however, willingly indulge in them. As his fate was inevitable, he made up his mind to meet it like a man, and strenuously endeavoured to banish every vain regret by shunning solitude, and providing himself with constant occupation. At first his German studies had seemed a weary labour; but he had both a talent and a taste for languages, and by degrees he became interested in them and in Caroline's progress. Caroline was not quite so apt a learner as Malcolm. The character of her mind was artistic and

constructive rather than analytical, and her philological acquirements were of the very commonest description, while those of her companion were considerable. Malcolm of course was not sorry to find that he made the more rapid progress, and neither indeed was Caroline. Perhaps although of too generous a nature to cherish the slightest jealousy of real superiority of any kind, she might not have been altogether satisfied that any other should have so much surpassed her; but that Malcolm should have done so was only natural and proper; for who was so clever, or so wise, or so good as Malcolm? In the afternoon Malcolm and Caroline frequently walked together. Sometimes the latter was grave and silent, but often they had conversations somewhat in the strain of that into which they had fallen on their first morning together in the library. Caroline's mind opened fast under the influence of this new companionship. Never before had she been intimately associated with her superior in knowledge and mental attainments. Hitherto she had only felt her

strength, now she felt her weakness. She became humble, without being depressed; the most teachable frame of mind, and therefore the best for a human being, whose whole life is or ought to be one great training. But Caroline learned not only from Malcolm's conversation; she learned even a more valuable lesson from his example,—she learned to imitate his fortitude in bearing the smaller share of trial which had fallen to her; while she privately determined, whatever her future lot might be, to imitate throughout the courage, endurance, and self-denial he had shown ever since the time when he had, at the call of a high sense of duty, voluntarily exchanged the military career, which had appeared to his youthful fancy so full of romance and glory, for the common-place drudgery of a merchant's desk. There were times when it appeared to Caroline that the pain caused her by an unrequited attachment was far more than outweighed by the joy of knowing such a person, and the pleasure of thinking she had been able to afford him some consolation. That ought to be enough for her.

She was not near good enough or wise enough to be worthy of the love of Malcolm Gordon. It was a boon far too rich for such as she was. Poor Caroline she was getting very humble.

There was no such pleasure to Caroline now as to see the old mirthful glance in Malcolm's eye, and to hear him, in his old good-natured way, turn into jest something or somebody, even although that somebody were herself. These gayer moments were not of frequent occurrence but they became less and less rare. Yet even on these very occasions when he seemed almost merry, his heart was full of a profound melancholy. It was his fancy, not his feelings that was diverted and yet the mere freedom of the former showed that his mind was in some degree emancipated from the tyranny of an absorbing sorrow. Still, and more especially when alone, or in uncongenial society, his heart felt empty and cold and aching. It was in Caroline's company that he was least unhappy, and though hardly conscious of this, he instinctively sought her society. It was soothing and pleasant to

him, after their German lesson was over, when the winter sun was setting red behind the snow hills and the great dark cedar tree on the lawn, to pace up and down with his young adopted sister, as he called her, and watch the blocks of ice floating down the current, or the crimson light on the snow, while he listened to her intelligent, *naïve*, remarks and questions ; or told her his own thoughts and feelings with that thirst for the sympathy of feminine friendship which is the general characteristic of all the more amiable part of his sex. Caroline sometimes wondered how far he had conquered his ill-starred attachment, or in what degree friendship for her had displaced love for Violet. But it was a subject which, in the most distant manner, their conversation had never approached since that dreary afternoon on the divan in the library. At last, however, a little circumstance occurred which seemed in some slight measure to throw a light upon the question.

One morning on entering the library at the usual hour for their German lesson, she found Malcolm seated at the table

with an open book before him, as if awaiting her presence. Immediately, however, on her entrance, he rose hastily and without speaking quitted the room. Imagining that he had forgotten his pocket-handkerchief or pencil, she sat down carelessly taking up the book he had been reading. It was a volume of Coleridge's poems; and as books which have been recently shut frequently do, it opened at the place where it had been last read. Attracted by a pencil mark down the side of the page, Caroline read the following part of the poem called "The Blossoming of the Solitary Date Tree." The part marked was partly in prose, partly in verse :

"The presence of one—'The best beloved, who loveth me best,' is for the heart, what the supporting air from within is to the hollow globe with its suspended car. Deprive it of this, and all without, that would have buoyed it aloft, even to the seat of the gods, becomes a burthen, and crushes it into flatness.

"Imagination! honourable aims;
Free commune with the quire that cannot die;
Science and song; delight in little things;
The buoyant child surviving in the man;
Fields, forests, ancient mountains, ocean, sky;
With all their voices,—O dare I accuse
My earthly lot as guilty of my spleen,
Or call my destiny niggard? O no! no!

It is her largeness, and her overflow,
Which being incomplete, disquieteth me so !
For never touch of greatness stirs my heart,
But tim'rously beginning to rejoice,—
Like a blind Arab, that from sleep doth start
In lonesome tent,—I listen for *thy* voice.
Beloved ! 'tis not thine, thou art not there !
Then melts the bubble into idle air,
And wishing without hope, I ruthlessly despair."

Caroline had just read these lines when she perceived that the page on which they were printed was wet, as if one tear had dropped upon it. She was inexpressibly affected, and so deeply pained that she was herself surprised at the pain she felt. Violet was then still his "beloved." His heart yearned for her still, while *she* was only his "good-natured little Caroline," as he had called her that very morning. But what reason had she ever had to suppose otherwise ? And yet Caroline could not avoid suspecting that she must herself have been supposing so. How silly she had been !—and poor Malcolm, how he still suffered !

She was yet musing thus painfully and sadly when he returned to the room. She quickly shut the book, and drawing towards her the German grammar, tried to look

unconscious. She felt however that she did not succeed very well. She was conscious that she coloured, and that her manner was flurried and not natural. Whether he observed it or not she could not tell, but if he did he took no notice of it. He was perfectly composed himself, and entered immediately with seriousness into the business of the lesson. It struck Caroline, however, that all the rest of the day he was more thoughtful and more gentle even than usual.

A day or two after this little incident Caroline chanced to take up the *Times*, which her brother had just laid down, and began to look over the "Deaths and Marriages." The first marriage on the list was that of "Arthur Cornish, Esq., only son of Sir George Cornish, Bart., of Harbourside, to Violet, daughter of the late Robert Smythe, Esq., of Liverpool."

They were actually married then. Caroline was sitting pondering their fate, when she was suddenly startled by hearing Mr. Colm, who, unperceived by her, had entered the room, ask, "Are you reading the papers, Caroline?" She looked up

He seemed in better spirits to-day than usual, and spoke almost gaily.

“N—no—not exactly.”

“Not exactly, certainly,” he said, smiling; “but perhaps you intend to read them?”

“No; I have seen all I care about.”

“If you are quite certain of that, then, Caroline, perhaps you will allow me to have them. There is something I wish to see; but not unless you are sure you have quite done with them.”

On hearing this wish, and thinking of the marriage, Caroline's first impulse was to keep the paper from Malcolm at all hazards. She recollected the proof she had stumbled upon but a day or two before of his still enduring love for Violet, and the anguish her loss yet caused him. She therefore hurriedly exclaimed, “Oh! I am not quite,—that is, there is nothing interesting in them.” Then, still keeping firmly hold of the paper, she rose, and looked out of the window.

“Don't you think it begins to grow fine? The clouds are clearing away. A turn on the gravel walk——”

Here Caroline stopped short, for Malcolm had placed himself straight before her, and was looking at her inquiringly.

"A turn on the gravel walk! My dear girl, it is pouring at this very instant: w should be wet to the skin in five minutes. Oh, Carry, Carry!" he continued half humorously, half sadly, "you are a wretched dissembler; you have succeeded admirably in rousing suspicion where none existed. I know as well as if you had told me that there is something in that paper you do not wish me to see." He added in a tone slightly lower, but quite firm, "I can guess what it is, too. Give me the paper, and let me read it. I think I shall be happier when I see that it is all irreversibly past. My kind Caroline, we should not yield to such weaknesses. And now give me the paper."

She gave it to him silently, and was preparing to leave the room, when he said, "Pray do not go." She sat down and watched him read the announcement which he did with an unmoved countenance. In about five minutes he laid down the paper, and began to talk up

general subjects. During the remainder of the day, however, he fell into an unusual number of reveries.

The time was now drawing near for Caroline's return to the south country. The term of her visit had been repeatedly lengthened, but at last it was finally fixed for the end of January, and it was now the middle of that month. The whole household at Locharroch were concerned at the thought of parting with her. Malcolm felt that in the pleasant intelligent young girl he should lose his greatest consolation. The boys always ceased making a noise for a minute or two whenever her departure was mentioned, and Catherine reported that Locharroch himself had said to her that he wished Caroline could have remained over the winter. Catherine was truly sorry to lose her young sister-in-law. The latter had lately been gaining greatly on her good opinion, partly from her kindness to Malcolm, and partly because she had almost entirely ceased to argue with herself. The truth was, Caroline had begun to perceive that there was no use in arguing with a person whose reasons were

mere assertions, and whose strong prejudices, if not the construction of her mind, rendered her incapable of drawing an inference. Caroline had also ceased to communicate to her the romantic aspirations and visions of adventure which frequently filled her brain; for Catherine neither admired them like her father and Agnes, nor sympathised with them like Malcolm, for that Malcolm did sympathise with them, even when he laughed at them, she was quite convinced. She had besides become greatly more distrustful of her own powers, and more sensible of the respect that was not only owing to a person so much older than herself, but to the rendering of which was due also to her own dignity. Catherine attributed these happy changes to her own judicious management; and this notion, so flattering to her self-esteem, helped to increase the regard she felt for Caroline. She expressed her satisfaction one day to her brother:

“I flatter myself Caroline is much improved since she came into my hands. She is a nice girl, if she had not been a little spoiled in the bringing-up. I thought

I should bring her to her senses, as I know I have got the faculty of teaching."

"And Caroline has got the faculty of learning," answered Malcolm, looking as if he were on the point of laughing, but without doing so.

"I hope they will not spoil her when she gets home again."

"I am not afraid of it. Caroline belongs to that class of persons who can learn from experience, and for whom experience is the best teacher, as she always is for those who are gifted with the eye rightly to read her lessons and the honesty to lay them to heart. She is new to life, clever, confident, and rash. She will first learn self-distrust, and then she will learn self-reliance; and though it may seem paradoxical, these two are both equally necessary to the right performance of our part in life."

"Certainly," answered Catherine, who thought her brother always right, and who was wonderfully ingenious in proving that his opinion agreed with her own; "one should distrust oneself when one is young,

and then when one has completely mastered the opinions of those who are competent to teach us, we should stick to them unflinchingly."

Malcolm now laughed outright, in a puzzling way,—

"Why, Catherine," he said, "you spoke with the air of a hero. What figure you would make at the stake! Then he added, in a softer tone, affectionately taking her hand, "How should I like, if I could carry off both you and Carry with me to India!"

"Carry off Carry with you to India!" echoed Mrs. Gordon, opening her eyes in unfeigned astonishment. Malcolm laughed a good deal, and coloured a little.

"No, no, Catherine; I am not so posterous quite as that. Poor dear little Carry! And yet if she were my young sister, I should insist on taking her with me to Bengal, though, to be sure, I should not have her long, as she would be married there immediately, which would be a great pity, as she is far too young yet. But I hope she will marry soon."

time or other. Perhaps when I come home again, I shall find her as matronly as you are. You must let me know when she is to be married that I may send her an Indian shawl."

And Malcolm stifled a sigh in its birth, as whenever he sighed Catherine got into a bad humour. She had now, however, except when anything recalled her attention to Violet Smythe, recovered her ordinary cheerful, energetic frame of mind. She was very solicitous that Malcolm, her only brother, and the last of the race, should marry, and she had been disappointed not only through her affections and personal pride, but through her regard for the family honours,—a real passion with Catherine. She did not, however, despair of his marrying yet; but as she sagaciously remarked to her husband, "It was still far too soon to think of putting such a notion into his head. It would only do harm." To which Locharroch replied by a "Hem" of approbation.

CHAPTER V.

LETTERS generally arrived at Locharroch when the family were at breakfast. They were usually handed to the lady herself, who distributed them around the table in silence. Caroline was always anxious for letters, and as the servant, according to custom, passed with them on a salver to her master, he generally glanced sharply at them, in the hope of catching a glimpse of Agnes' fair, angular, unmeaning handwriting, or the Major's stiff, steady, accurate characters. It was now within ten days of the time fixed for her departure from Locharroch, and she had been a day or two longer in hearing from home than usual. As the letters were handed to her

brother, she thought she saw her father's writing.

"There is a letter for me, John," she cried, "is not there?"

"No, there is not."

"Surely that is papa's writing?"

"Yes, but it is for myself."

Caroline was much surprised. That her father should write to John was quite an uncommon occurrence, it being the habit of the Major and his son, except in the present instance, when Caroline was from home, to leave all the epistolary intercourse to be carried on by the ladies of the family. Catherine seemed to have shared in the surprise; for before her husband had got down the first page of the letter, which was by no means a short one, she inquired,

"They are all quite well, I hope, at Wallacefield?"

"My father says nothing to the contrary," was John's laconic reply.

"What a long letter for papa to write!" cried Caroline, as soon as he had finished it. "What is the news from home?"

"It is chiefly about some business matters," he answered, and phlegmatically began to eat his breakfast. Seeing that his appetite was as good as usual, and that he betrayed not the slightest discomfort, Caroline thought that there could be nothing wrong, and ate her breakfast too, in a comfortable frame of mind, although she felt not a little anxious, and was somewhat provoked by her brother's baffling replies. Perceiving, however, that nothing was to be elicited, she withdrew as soon as the repast was over to the library, to read, till Malcolm joined her for their German lesson.

She had not been seated above ten minutes, when he appeared—a full half hour earlier than usual.

"You are very eager for your lesson this morning," she began; when she stopped, noticing that he looked grave.

"Catherine wants you down-stairs," he said; and there was a peculiar kindness in his tone which alarmed his young listener.

"There is nothing the matter at home, Malcolm?" she cried, with anxious eagerness.

ness, and springing from her seat. "Agnes is not ill? She is so delicate."

"No, my dear," answered Malcolm, as he drew her hand within his arm; "Agnes and your father are both quite well, but I believe your papa has got into some pecuniary difficulties. But you shall hear all this instant."

"Oh! I can bear anything, if they are only all well."

They were now in the breakfast-room. John and Catherine were standing at the window, apparently in consultation. They turned round as the others entered, and the latter advancing to meet Caroline, kindly took her by the hand.

"I am sorry to say, my dear Caroline, that we have got bad news for you. Do you remember, soon after you came to us, Agnes writing to you that your papa had invested his money in some sort of joint-stock banking concern, in which Mr. Ross was a partner?"

Caroline recollected the circumstance, although till this instant, so much had her mind been occupied by different

thoughts and feelings, it had quite escaped her memory.

"You recollect what your brother said on that occasion," continued Mrs. Gordon. "I am sorry to say that his fears have been verified. The company is insolvent. It is a thousand pities your father did not consult John."

"What is the extent of the loss?" demanded Caroline, in a firm voice.

"It is better you should know the worst at once, Caroline," said her brother, now beginning to speak, "as you are a sensible young woman, and will not think it necessary to faint or go into hysterics."

Even at that moment Caroline felt a transient gleam of pleasure at being called a *woman*, and in Malcolm's presence.

"Certainly not," she said.

Locharroch continued, "According to the law in such cases, my father is not only liable for his own shares, but in default of payment by the other partners his property will be all seized on behalf of the creditors. Thus, not only does

lose all his private property, which was embarked in the concern, but his pay will be taken to insure his life for the benefit of the creditors. In short, he has nothing left."

"Oh, poor papa!" cried Caroline, becoming very pale, and although her mind could not in an instant grasp the full extent of the misfortune, feeling as if she had been suddenly stunned.

"And yourself, Caroline," said her brother; "I regret it chiefly on your account. Agnes has a hundred a year from this property, so that it is not so bad for her as for you."

"Oh! I do not mind myself. I am very strong, and can work."

"Of course," continued Locharroch, "I shall allow my father an annuity as long as he lives,—I do not say *settle* it on him, because as his own property it would be taken from him. I wish I could do more, Caroline; but I have a family of my own."

And by this speech Caroline learned that if her brother had not very warm or passionate feelings, he had a sound and

just heart. But ere she could answer Catherine added, with much warmth,—

“And if you do not marry, Caroline, if at any time you should be in want of home, remember that you will always find at Locharroch a sister’s or a daughter’s place.”

And as she finished, as if by a simultaneous movement, the sisters threw themselves into one another’s arms, and were locked for a minute in a close embrace. But not otherwise did Caroline express her gratitude; for she knew that Catherine and felt certain that John, belonged to the class of people who do not like speeches and scenes.

“You must pack up to-day, Caroline,” said the latter, “and be ready to start with me to-morrow morning for Wallacefield.”

“No, Locharroch,” said his wife, who on this subject alone ever opposed him. “you have been coughing for a week, and complaining of a pain in your chest, and cannot think of your taking such a journey in this raw, cold weather; it might be as much as your life is worth. I am su

your father and Agnes would be quite distressed that you should run such a risk. You know you are not strong."

Locharroch did know it, and he knew also that he was one of a consumptive family. He hesitated for a second.

"Caroline cannot go alone at this season, and there will be business matters to transact."

"But I will go with Caroline," cried Malcolm; "and as to business, if you will give me instructions with regard to what you wish done, I have no doubt I can do it, as I am more accustomed to that kind of business than you are."

"Very true; that will do," said Locharroch.

"Oh Malcolm!" cried Caroline, with trembling lips and tears in her eyes, "how kind you are to me!"

"You have been very kind to me, Caroline," he answered, in a low, choking voice, "and it is my turn now to show you I am not ungrateful."

As he spoke, he held out his hand. Caroline gave him hers, and he pressed it warmly.

"Come," said Locharroch at last, "do not waste any more time. Go and get your packing over before dinner, Caroline, and in the evening we can talk over your plans for the future. Meanwhile, Malcolm and I will have a consultation on business matters."

Caroline had enough to do to be ready before dinner; however, she succeeded. She had been so busy all day, that she had hardly had time to think of the misfortunes. It seemed so strange, to be leaving Locharroch in this sudden manner; and yet she could not feel as if she were really leaving it. She was almost happy in the idea of Malcolm going with her, even though the long journey in his company was but a prelude to their separation. Altogether her mind was in a perfect whirl; yet she made all her arrangements with the utmost regularity and dispatch. Caroline, who had never in her life packed before, showed herself quite an adept in the art; and there was no papa and Agnes to stand by and applaud. But it seemed as if the news she had heard, instead of overwhelming

and incapacitating her, as it would have done a weaker spirit, seemed to have given her a new energy, to have made her conscious of new capacities for action and thought. All the while that she was busily engaged arranging and contriving how to dispose her various articles of dress and convenience, she was revolving in her own mind what was the most advisable course for the family in general to take, and what she herself ought to do; for it was a fixed idea in Caroline's mind, that she, by her own exertions, was eventually to maintain her father.

Nothing serves so well to show the quality of the character, as any sudden or trying emergency; for while superior minds always rise with the difficulties of the situation in which they may be placed, inferior ones generally sink under them. Before she went down to dinner, Caroline had a plan, not only conceived but matured. Romantic, indeed, it might have appeared to the eye of sober experience; but the generous romance of youth is frequently the forerunner of a noble after-life; and those are to be pitied who, at

any season of life, have never learned, or have ceased to believe this.

Nothing was said during dinner; but as soon as that meal was over, the children were dismissed, and the elders of the party, including Caroline, drew round the fire for consultation. Caroline then proposed her plan, which was—that John should take and furnish a small house or *flat*, in some healthy, inexpensive part of Edinburgh, for her father; that she should go out as a governess during the day; and that with what she should receive for her labours, in addition to Agnes's annuity, they should be maintained. "I know dear Agnes too well," she added, "not to be certain that she will share all she possesses with papa and me."

"Your idea is sensible enough," answered her brother; "but I fear you over-rate your own probable earnings. As a day-governess at your age, and with your slender share of accomplishments, you are not likely to gain more than thirty or forty pounds a year, and I doubt, Caroline, if you could live as you imagine on that sum. I shall, therefore, in addition

to furnishing and paying the rent of a small house in a quiet part of the town, allow my father a hundred a year till you can make as much, which, in my opinion, you will most likely never do. But I approve of your being a governess, only don't overwork yourself, for that would be folly."

"No, I will not; but remember, I am strong, much stronger than Agnes or you are. But you have not heard all my plan. Though, perhaps, I may never succeed, still I do not despair. When I am in Edinburgh, I shall try to save money enough to take lessons in drawing in water-colours. I am so fond of drawing landscapes, that I think I must have some ability for it, and I know many people have made a good deal of money in that way. At all events, I am determined to try."

"Now, Caroline," said her sister-in-law, "you have hitherto spoken in a way very creditable to your judgment, young as you are; and I am very sorry indeed to hear you running off at last with any such vain and chimerical ideas of your own powers. It would be ridiculous in you to waste

your time and your money, with so little of both to spare, upon any such folly. You are not a stupid girl, and you can sketch tolerably enough from nature; but you are not the genius they have led you at home to suppose, and you can never be an artist of any eminence. I speak to your friend, Caroline, for I am really interested in you." And Catherine did indeed speak in a kind tone.

Poor Caroline's little ærial castle seemed suddenly to have vanished; she felt hurt and mortified, while her eyes filled with tears. There is nothing more disheartening to a young person than to be *set down* in this way; and few things more trying to the temper, than to find that the natural impulses of a genuine, unselfish love of nature and art, coupled with the generous wish to confer happiness on another, have been mistaken for the mere aspirations of vanity and confidence of conceit. Caroline had yet to learn, that there are some persons who, without being stupid or unkind, can never appreciate the motives of others; and also, that all minds are more especially those that are of a superior

order, must in many things learn to do without sympathy, and to depend upon themselves alone for inspiration and encouragement. She replied, however, but in a tone which had lost the buoyancy with which she had formerly spoken, "But at least I can try, Catherine; there can be no harm in that. If some persons did not think they had talents to be artists, we should have no artists; and though I may never be one, many who have succeeded, have at my age seemed as little likely as I do."

"Quite true, Caroline," whispered Malcolm, in a tone of cordial encouragement.

"My advice to you, Caroline," said her brother, "is to take lessons for a year under the best master you can procure; and if, at the end of that time, he despairs of your becoming an artist, you should give it up at once, and content yourself with the additional capability you will then have acquired, of teaching drawing. I agree, however, with Catherine, in thinking you ought not to throw away any portion of your own slender means upon what, as she says, may turn out a mere

chimera. I shall therefore be at the expense of your instruction for a year, several years, if it should be thought advisable." Caroline thanked her brother warmly, while Catherine contented herself with advising her young sister not to be too sanguine.

They began to talk of the failure; and Caroline then discovered, what she had not hitherto had time to think of, that the same misfortune which had overtaken her father, the Purveses and the Rosses were also involved.

"The Rosses!" cried Catherine; and to Caroline's amazement, her blue eyes brightened with something like delight. "then Ardennan will be in the market. Malcolm!"

"My dear Catherine!" cried her brother, to whose mind, it must be confessed, the same idea had suggested itself, but which had been repressed by an instinctive idea of its selfishness, "consider the poor Rosses; yesterday rolling in comfort and luxury, to-day without a farthing in the world."

"I am sorry for them, at least for M

and Mrs. Ross, for they seemed worthy, sensible people; but people better born have been as ill off as they are."

"And that makes their case less pitiable, does it? Their reverse will seem less bitter, when they remember that we, for instance, were once in the same situation; or when we, Catherine, were penniless and homeless, doubtless you remember that we derived great consolation from the reflection, that Charles Edward, the last of the Stuarts, had wandered about these very wilds, homeless and throneless." And for a second the corners of Malcolm's mouth curled, while he fixed his clear, open glance on his sister.

"But surely, Malcolm, you will strain every nerve, and make every sacrifice to buy back our own Ardennan, our father's home, the castle of Ian Dhu, the brave founder of our race, Malcolm, Malcolm!"

"As valiant a chief as ever levied blackmail; as brazen-faced a robber as any who ever said 'Stand!' on the king's highway."

"Don't be teasing, Malcolm; I know you feel as I do."

“I am not quite certain that I am, the full, as sensible of the glory of having had a highwayman for my ancestor. You see, my dear sister, my busy mercantile profession has, I blush to confess it to a true highlander like yourself, made me somewhat of a degenerate Gordon. Being a merchant, like Mr. Ross, I cannot but sympathise with him, as well as fight with you. And yet I love old Ardenno and will buy it back at any sacrifice less than that of justice and rectitude, even at the sacrifice of additional years of exile. And if God should ever spare me to come back to my native land and my own people, I shall try to do as much for them as I can. Dhu. I shall try to teach them that it is better to work than to steal; better to have a comfortable house, and a well clothed family, than to drink whisky; better to trust God than even the laird. And even if I never succeed, I shall rejoice to think that I have at least tried to do some good to my dear clansmen, perhaps sowed some small seed, that may spring up after I have been laid in Locharroch churchyard. This is what I have

got to live for, Catherine—for this, and for you.”

As he spoke, the brother and sister clasped hands. “You will buy Ardennan,” Mrs. Gordon whispered; “my dearest wish on earth then is fulfilled.” And Catherine’s eyes, which wept so seldom, were now filled with tears.

Malcolm sighed. Perhaps he was thinking of the long term of exile yet before him; perhaps he was thinking that even the possession of Ardennan was not to him now the joy it might once have been. Perhaps he was reflecting upon that most trite, yet ever-fruitful subject—the vicissitudes of life; and thinking of all the chances and changes, all the deep joy and all the bitter pain of the last few months. Meanwhile Caroline, with a sort of chilly feeling at her heart, had glided out of the room. She, then, had no part in the affections which bound Malcolm to life.

That night, after tea, as she and Malcolm stood together at the fire, while Locharroch and his wife were seated at the table, engaged in their several occupations of reading and working, she asked in an

under-tone, "Do you think there is hope of my ever becoming an artist? She spoke anxiously.

"I cannot tell, Caroline. I do not wish to deceive you, or mislead you with hopes, for that would not be kind; but it seems to me that your drawings show much promise, and some originality. Your ideas, however, seem often very imperfectly, not to say unskilfully, executed; but at your age, and with the few advantages you have had, perhaps it could have been otherwise. I should say you need not quite despair, but I dare not encourage you to be sanguine. I am, however, no artist, or connoisseur, and my opinion is hardly worth having. And now, Caroline, be sure you cannot deny that I have given you as satisfactory a reply as any could that ever existed."

Caroline was always glad to hear Malcolm could jest. She did not guess that his cheerfulness had been partly assumed for her sake. He added:—"At all events, Caroline, you must not forget to paint me a view of Loch Achquon according to your promise. Whether

turn out a great artist or not, it will be beautiful and valuable in my eyes."

"For my sake, or for the sake of the subject? I wish I knew," thought Caroline.

Caroline was up the next morning long before daybreak, for they were to start at seven o'clock. The breakfast was a cold, sad meal; there was something very dispiriting in the raw, dark, February morning. The weather had now been fresh for some weeks, but during the past night there had been a raw frost, and it seemed this morning as if it were again thawing. The stars were twinkling more faintly and sadly through the rents in the foggy sky; patches of snow lay upon the mountains, while their summits were completely lost in the dull, heavy mists.

"And so this is to be my last view of Locharroch," thought Caroline, as for a minute she looked out of the window. She felt the tears ready to start to her eyes, and turning round, drew near the fire. It was burning hotly; a heap of cloaks and plaids lay airing on the fender, while the light from two candles on the

table seemed to struggle for victory with the cold, grey dawn. Locharroch, as if exhausted by having spoken so much more than usual the preceding day, had relapsed into a taciturnity more profound than even Malcolm, too, was silent. Catherine alone was bustling about, and pressing the waiters to eat and drink. Never had her manner to Caroline been so warm as on this morning. It seemed as if she could not sufficiently attend to the comfort of the latter.

“You have not got enough on, Caroline. It is very cold travelling so far in the middle of winter. You must have a plaid, too; Malcolm will bring it back with him; see, I have warmed it for you.”

Caroline could hardly find voice to say—“Thank you,” as in a sort of absent-minded, mechanical way, she added the proffered plaid to her already numerous wrappings.

“And here is my plaid brooch to fasten it with,” continued Catherine, giving her a large circular brooch formed of Scotch pebble, set in silver. Caroline could not say,—“Thank you,” this time, and her fingers trembled so much as she tried

put it into the shawl, that she let it fall. Malcolm instantly stooped and picked it up. Noticing her agitation, he said,—
“Let me fasten it for you.” With a little awkwardness he managed to do so, quoting, as he accomplished the feat, while he looked in her face, kindly and cheerfully,—

“For never brooch the folds combined
Above a heart more good and kind.”

Caroline’s heart for a moment bounded wildly, and she could no longer restrain her tears.

“The carriage is at the door,” said Locharroch, putting his head into the room, which he had quitted a few minutes before. And then, it was but a hurried embrace, and an earnest “God bless you!” from Catherine, with one short and silent, but cordial grasp from her husband, and Caroline was with Malcolm in the carriage, driving fast away from Locharroch.

CHAPTER VI.

ON the evening of their second day's journey, the travellers began to draw near to Wetherstone. Malcolm and Caroline had the inside of the stage-coach to themselves, as it was a season of the year when the road was little frequented. The entrance to Wetherstone was by a long, narrow, badly-paved, insufficiently-lighted street. It was a wet night. As the wheels rattled over the rough causeway, as Caroline's eyes and ears were greeted by familiar sights and sounds, as she began truly to realize the certainty that in a few minutes, perhaps, she should once more meet with her father and Agnes,—she thought of the meeting with a sort of mingled

dread and longing, and her heart began to beat violently.

"Oh, Malcolm!" she cried, "I hope we shall find them well."

"They were well a few days ago. Pray be composed, my dear girl."

As he spoke, he took her hand, and held it in his. And then she began to think that this was the last time she should enter Wetherstone as one coming to her home. Alas! even supported by Malcolm's presence, this home-coming was indeed a sad one.

At last the coach stopped, and over the heads of the vociferous rabble of idle boys who invariably crowd round a stage-coach on its arrival, the first object Caroline saw was the phaeton, with its cover up. And then she caught a glimpse of a broad, sturdy figure, which, even in the uncertain light, she could not mistake.

"It's yersel', Miss Caroline, hinney. Hech, sirs! but we've a' wearit 'on ye sair."

"How is papa, Wattie, and Agnes?"

"He's but dowie, puir mon. But ye'll sune hearten him up. He'll be better gin

ye were hame. Nae doot, it's been unco business, and I couldna ha' been w for it gif it had been mysel'. But ways o' Providence is past reckoning, gif it had been me, I wad ha' seen t Purrisses and Rosses and sic like, at a Nickie, or I wad ha' fashed wi' ony o' the banks or trashery. But it canna be hel now, and least said 's sunest mended. ' maister and Miss Agnes bade us tell that they wad ha' come till the coach meet ye, but they thout it was better bide at hame."

It was only a mile to Wallacefield, Wattie drove fast. Such was Caroline's agitation as they drew near, that Malcolm found it difficult to make her sit still. At last the carriage stopped. The house-door was thrown open. Caroline rushed before Malcolm. He did not immediately follow her into the drawing-room, but through the open door he saw her follow to the heart of a tall, soldier-like old man with thin silver hair, and bright hazel eyes, and heard the fond words,—“ my heart's treasure! my Caroline's child.” Malcolm felt his eyes grow dim.

that moment he envied the Major. And then he heard a low and gentle voice, which he guessed to be that of Agnes, but he could not see her, or hear what she said. At last the Major inquired,—
“But where is Mr. Gordon, my darling?”

“Malcolm!” cried Caroline.

For a minute she had forgotten even Malcolm. The latter now entered the room. He was received by the Major with soldier-like politeness and cordial kindness. The old man thanked him, at once with dignity and earnestness for his kindness to Caroline; while Agnes received him with her usual placid amiability. The latter then hurried away Caroline “to take off her things in case they might be damp.”

No sooner were the two gentlemen alone, than the Major entered upon the subject of his losses. He spoke of them with firmness and composure, yet with evidently deep distress. Malcolm could not help admiring while he pitied the gallant old man, whom sorrow could pierce but not bow, and who stood erect in conscious rectitude.

"I was partly deceived into this business," he said; "but I reproach nobody, only my own rashness. I would not mind it, if it were only myself—but my Caroline. It was only for my darling's sake I wished to be rich, and now I have beggared her." Here his lip trembled visibly, and his eyes became moist.

"Not beggared her," said Malcolm, "while she has youth, and health, and talents. Caroline is equal to the emergency. I am convinced she thinks only of you."

"God bless her! She is just like her mother. I wonder how I ever came to possess two such angels; and my Agnes is an angel, too. I cannot tell you the blessing she has been to me the last few days. My dear sir, though poor I am rich; but it is hard for them, poor things. What are they to do, poor dears? What does John say?"

"We have thought of a plan, or rather Caroline has thought of one." And Malcolm then detailed what they had proposed to do, praising Caroline warmly for

the spirit, energy, and goodness of heart she had shown throughout.

“Just like her,” said the fond father, with tears of delight in his eyes. “When her angel-mother died, she told me she had left me another Caroline;—and so she has. Nothing ever went wrong that my Caroline could not set to rights. She was a wonderful creature, so clever, and so good; and her daughter is just the same,—and so young, too!”

Meanwhile Caroline had been detailing their plans to Agnes, who brightened up at the recital, and came down to make tea in tolerably cheerful spirits. The only part of the scheme she did not like was that which related to Caroline being a governess. She would be obliged to go out in all kinds of weather; and could not fail to get wet feet, coughs, and sore throats. This part of the plan, however, Caroline would by no means agree to alter.

“Better,” she said, “to work for my bread now when I am young and strong, than run the chance of being obliged to do so when I am old and feeble, or, worse still, be dependent perhaps on the charity

of those who have little affection for me. You know I am younger than any of you, and may be left last."

"Heaven bless you! my darling," said the Major. He then whispered to Malcolm: "Is not she a surprising creature? She thinks of everything, and a mere child too."

Caroline either heard the whisper, or suspected its import, for she blushed deeply as she said: "You must not suppose, Malcolm, that I am quite so conceited as to think of myself all that papa is so good as to think of me. I am quite aware, now at least, that I am an ignorant, inexperienced girl, with everything to learn and something to unlearn."

"Yes, Carry, I know all your defects perfectly, so you need not tell me them. I learned them all at Locharroch; and my opinion is not to be altered by any one's report—not even by your own. And never mind what your father and I are saying. We are not quarrelling, are we, Major?"

Caroline felt comforted by this speech. Agnes then said—

"But, Caroline, there can be no occasion for your being both a governess and an artist?"

"Certainly not; indeed I should not have time. But many years must elapse ere I can hope to be an artist, even if it should turn out that I possess the talent."

"There can be no doubt of that, my dear, I should think," Agnes replied, with as much indignation at the idea of Caroline not being able to do anything she pleased as her low, gentle voice was able to express. "I am sure you are as clever as anybody, and everybody says you have a particularly good taste for drawing. Five years ago you were the best drawer at Miss Gray's school; and the view you took of the mill last year was so like, I should have known it anywhere. To be sure Mr. Williamson thought the sluice was a little too big, but it was the exact shape of the real sluice; nobody could have mistaken it. I remember you sat out drawing it one night till the dew began to fall, and I was much afraid that you would get rheumatism or toothach."

"Still, Agnes dear, you must not be

disappointed if I should not turn out artist."

"No, I shall not be very much disappointed if you should change your mind about it, as perhaps it might be an encouragement to you to sit out of doors too much, or to hurt your health by close application. I would rather never see a picture as long as I live, than you should make yourself ill by painting the Pictures are very pretty, certainly; they are not worth hurting one's health for; and even the money you could enjoy, if you were not well."

Even the money! There was not a mercenary person on the face of the earth than Agnes Irvine, and yet the money appeared to her to be more than pictures. Caroline felt that with such views of art as Agnes possessed, further argument, either on its dignity or charms, or her own incapacity to be an artist, would be quite lost. Strange to say, she felt almost as much disheartened by her sister's unhesitating confidence in her powers, as she had been by Mr. Gordon's entire disbelief in them.

Altogether that evening, though neither merry nor joyous, was not without a sort of chastened happiness. The heavy cloud which for some days had lowered over the minds of the Major and his elder daughter, seemed to have been almost dispelled by the presence of the young Caroline. Her ardent, hopeful temper had, as if by some sudden spell, reanimated their drooping spirits, and brightened at once the future, which, a few short hours before, had seemed so cheerless. And Caroline saw how they loved her,—she saw, too, what she might—what she *must* be to them; and thus seeing, she resolved to cast away all selfish thoughts, and to be happy in a life of devotion to those who loved her so dearly. Thus, too, she should be more worthy of loving Malcolm Gordon.

Malcolm, too, felt happy to-night. The sight of so much fond affection and unfeigned kindness, so much singleness of mind and purity of heart, had done him good, at the same time that it had given him a feeling of half-envious sadness. He wished he were one of such a family—the brother of Agnes and Caroline; nay, even

the son of the gallant, true-hearted, old veteran. Had he been so he could have done much for them, which, situated as he was, he could not do. "There is nothing," he thought, "like the love of a happy family circle; but it is a happiness I shall never possess. Had I all the wealth of the Indies, I should be poor in comparison with these three." Nor did he even change his mind, when, after the ladies had retired to rest, the Major, in addition to another panegyric upon Caroline, treated him to his standing topics—the siege of Seringapatam, the Mahratta war, and "when we stormed that fort where I got a cut in the face."

The Irvines were to quit Wallacefield in a week, and the furniture was to be sold immediately after their departure. Malcolm was to remain with them over the next day, and then to go to Edinburgh to take a house for them. After leaving Wallacefield they had arranged to stay with the minister and his sister at the manse, till their Edinburgh domicile should be in readiness to receive them. Malcolm promised to pay them a visit in

Edinburgh during the succeeding spring or summer. In the autumn he was to return to India.

I shall not stop at present to describe Peggy's rapture and exclamations over her returned "bairn," as she called Caroline; nor how she repeated that she "kenn'd the first glint o' her bonny een wad set them a' to rights;" nor her astonishment that "Maister Gordon didna wear the kilts," together with her opinion that he was "a rale pleesant, weel-fa'ard gentleman; but no sae gallant-looking as the Major, when he was young."

The following morning, after breakfast was over, Caroline strayed into the drawing-room. It had always been her favourite apartment, for it commanded the pretty view of the river described in the opening chapter of this book, while within it was tastefully and commodiously furnished. Caroline's intention had been to look at the dear familiar landscape once more. But ere she could put this purpose in execution, her attention was arrested by the sight of the drawing-room chairs—the labour of poor Agnes's life.

And they too must be sold ! They must pass into the possession of people who would look upon them as mere pieces of common furniture. Caroline felt that tears rush to her eyes and she turned to the window, but not to look at the view ;— she did not see it, although it lay before her in the morning light. She was unconscious too that any one had entered the room, till Malcolm, close beside her, pronounced her name. She looked up hastily.

“Crying! my dear Carry,” he said kindly, and laying, as he often did, his hand affectionately upon her shoulder.

She smiled through her tears, as she rejoined, “ I dare say you will think me foolish, Malcolm, but somehow or other it came over me all at once. It was seeing those chairs, dear Agnes’ pretty work, and papa was so proud of them. If he had not known they were to be sold, he would have shown them all to you before now. And they too must go.”

“ Never mind, dear,” said Agnes, who at this instant joined them ; “ I can work one or two more. I dare say some

of our old friends will buy them, and I shall not much mind; so don't distress yourself about that." Agnes spoke with her usual gentle composure, but Caroline saw that her lip trembled a little.

"Ah! Agnes," she said, "you are a real heroine. Don't I know that this furniture is the chief pride and triumph of your life."

"Not the *chief*, darling;" and one bright little drop trembled in the small grey eye of the speaker as it was turned fondly on the ingenuous countenance of her younger sister. Malcolm now turned to look out of the window; but he did not see the view any more clearly than Caroline had done a few minutes before.

During the day Caroline and Malcolm took a walk together. The latter had never been in that neighbourhood before, and they went to explore some of its beauties. Both were more silent than usual. For some days past Caroline's feelings had been wound up almost to a pitch of heroism, and now they seemed to undergo a reaction,—not however that her resolutions were changed or that her

determination wavered. But she felt day less sanguine. Partly, probably, from the fatigue of the journey and the buoyancy and excitement preceding it, her usual buoyant spirits were a little depressed while she could not forget that Malcolm was to go to-morrow. It was her uppermost idea. For the time it seemed almost to have driven the remembrance of the change of circumstances out of her head. It was their last walk—their last day together. Yes, the happy period of their association—happy in spite of all its trials and its sadness, was now over, perhaps never to be renewed again. True, he had promised to visit them in Edinburgh, but only for a day or two. In the autumn he was to return to India, to remain for years. Perhaps when he came back he might have forgotten her. And the poor girl's heart felt heavy indeed as she contemplated this contingency. The idea of impending separation, poisoned the happiness of the few hours which yet remained of his beloved society. Caroline grudged the minutes as they passed as a miser grudges his gold, and, like the miser, she

lost all pleasure in them from the very excess of the value she set on them. She would have given much to know to what extent Malcolm felt regret in parting with her. She longed to know how much of the trouble he had taken was due to friendship for her, how much to that benevolence which made so conspicuous a feature in his character. But these were problems she could not solve. "And perhaps," she thought, "it is as well, after all, that I cannot, as it might only mortify me."

After their walk, they strolled into the garden, and there they found Wattie.

"Eh sirs! Miss Carline," he said, "but I am glad to see ye. I am jist snedding a wheen o' thae curran' busses, that folk ma'na hae it to say that the place wasna weel keepit. I jalouse, though I say it mysel', wha shouldna say it, that it wunna be better keepit this mony a lang day."

"Where is papa?" asked Caroline, who hardly knew whether to smile or to weep at this speech.

"'Deed then, I canna tell ye. He is ne'er i' the gairden now, puir man. He's

only been aince in't sin' the news came
and says he, 'Wattie, ye ken, sir, (to Major
colm), he aye ca's me Wattie, though many
folk ca' me Walter; but, as I was saying,
says he, 'Wattie, I canna bide to see yon
peer trees now, and thae paradise stoc
and puir Miss Carline's bonny floor-borde
'Little did we think, Wattie,' says
'when we bought yon new roses, and the
white citisus, to be a pleasant surprise
her, 'gin she cam' hame, that neither I
nor any o' us wad be here to see the
floor.' Hech sirs! Miss Carline, the wife
o' Providence! An' it's no a month since
they were plantit."

Caroline could not help crying now.
The idea of the Major, who loved his
garden so dearly, and to whom every tree
and flower it contained was as a pet child,
which had grown up under his own eye,
being unable to enter it, came sadly and
forcibly home to her imagination. Walter
continued:

"It makes me wae even to see the
ingans and the brocoli, but for a' that,
lang as I'm here I canna bide out o' the
gairden."

“And where are you going, my poor Wattie, when we leave?” said Caroline, “for, of course, much as we shall miss you, we cannot afford to retain your services.”

A tear of gratified affection started to the eyes of honest Wattie at this speech, while a smile of gratified vanity played round his mouth.

“I have provided for that, hinny,” he said majestically, yet with a tremulous voice; “let alane auld Walter for a lang-headed chiel. Through Davy Claisey, the upper-gairdner at Watherstone Castle, I ha’ gotten a place as gairdner to ane o’ the squares in Edinburgh. Davy kens I am a handy chap, an’ has aye been a gude friend to me, sae as sune as I kenned how things was, I betuke mysel’ to him, and speired after an Edinburgh gairden. I thought I might aiblins bring ye a floor now and then, and that ye wadna be that ill-pleased to see auld Walter, and hear about the new floors. An’ I thought I might ha’ a crack whilesi’ the wunter nights wi’ that ignorant woman Peggy, wha’ will be dull her lane.”

Caroline smiled through her tears as she replied, with sincerity, that she was delighted to hear that they were not to be entirely separated from him. She added that she hoped he would come to see them as often as he could. Upon which Wattie scraped and bowed, and wiped his eyes with the sleeve of his coat. As they walked towards the house, Malcolm remarked with something of the old merriment :

“What a treasure that man is ! He must furnish you with a perpetual fund of amusement. And then such a good hearted, honest fellow, as he seems withal.

“And yet Peggy is even more amusing,” cried Caroline, “and not in the least conceited, and more thoroughly unselfish I like Wattie, but I love Peggy.”

On their return to the house, they found Agnes busy at work with a large mesh and a netting-needle upon some manufacture apparently just begun. Caroline inquired what she was doing.

“I am netting curtains for our sitting room windows in Edinburgh. It struck me I should require work when we were staying with the Williamsons, and as

had a little time this morning, I thought it would be as well to set them a going."

"Ah, Agnes! you are truly the busy bee. Robert Bruce's spider was a mere joke to you."

"They will look very nice, I think, and I shall ask Miss Williamson to allow me to copy her ottoman, for as there is so little wood about it, it will not be at all expensive to have it made up. I have thought of various things that will look very pretty, and of which the cost will be quite trifling."

And Agnes looked quite happy at the prospect of so much work. Caroline was pleased to find that she could be thus amused. She only wished that something could be found in like manner to divert her father. Although he never complained, she perceived more clearly to-day, than on the previous night when he had been excited by her return, that he was indeed very much depressed. Although their future prospects did not seem quite so dreary as when Caroline was absent, he could not cease reproaching himself for having been the cause of their misfortune.

CHAPTER VII.

CAROLINE had so much to do, so many arrangements to make, and so many people to see, after Malcolm's departure, that she did not feel so lonely and sad, as she believed she should have done. Moreover he had asked her to write to him soon as they got to Edinburgh; adding "I shall answer your letter, Caroline, although I can hardly hope that my epistle will be as interesting to you, as yours will be to me."

Caroline was so delighted at the prospect of having a letter from Malcolm that she could not trust her voice to speak.

"I shall have nothing to tell you except how I am getting on with Germany and whether Bennachquaigh is covered

with snow. I daresay you will not care for such a letter."

"Not care!" Oh, Malcolm!"

He was almost startled by the reproachful earnestness of her tone.

"I beg your pardon, my dear Carry; I spoke in jest, and did not mean to imply any doubt, either of your friendship or your constancy. I only meant that the good-will of the writer must atone for any deficiency of interest in the subject."

"Now, Malcolm," answered Caroline, who had speedily recovered herself, "I feel almost inclined to accuse you of affectation. You must know that you have plenty of subjects within your mind to write about; and that you are not dependent entirely upon events happening around you."

Malcolm smiled slyly at this speech, and threw at the speaker, in playful revenge, a little slip of paper he had been twirling in his fingers. He had quite enough vanity, coupled with respect for Caroline's understanding and sincerity, to be very much flattered by it.

The day following that on which Mal-

colm left Wallacefield, Agnes and Caroline found time to go to Wetherstone to call on the Purveses—their fellow-sufferers.

“Carry, dear,” said Agnes, as they walked together,—“I am afraid you will not find them resigned to their misfortunes. And indeed however wrong may be, *I* have no right to blame them for it; as my own heart at first, I fear, was very rebellious. It seemed so hard for papa, and you, dear.”

“And why was it harder for me, than for you, Agnes?”

“Oh, because I have a trifle; and though of course, while I live that is yours too—yet, God forbid that I should live as long as you do. However, ‘sufficient for the day is the evil thereof,’ and it was wrong in me, Carry, not to feel that our Father in Heaven would always watch over my dear child.”

Caroline was deeply penetrated by this speech—a long one for Agnes—and she uttered in her heart a fervent supplication, that she too might receive a portion of the faith and resignation which had been vouchsafed to her pious sister, and

be enabled to perform the work which lay before her in patience and devotion. Such were the thoughts which swelled the heart of the young Caroline with a generous emotion as she reached the door of her uncle's house.

She and Agnes were shown up-stairs to the drawing-room. There they found everything in confusion; but Mrs. Purves and her daughter dressed almost as smartly as usual. The latter, to Caroline's surprise, was working a purse of a highly ornamental description. The former, who was standing, and seemed as if she were in the act of hastily arranging some of the furniture, stopped on seeing who the visitors were, and advanced to meet them.

"It's you, is it, Caroline? And so you've got back from the north, after your long visit? You staid *such* a time, we really began to think you weren't coming back!"

"But we heard you brought a beau with you," said Jane.

"I suppose you mean Mr. Malcolm." Gordon," answered Caroline. "He ac-

compained me home instead of John, who has a bad cold, and was afraid of the journey."

"Oh, bad colds are very convenient sometimes!—I thought you would not have staid so long in such a dull place without some attraction."

"Locharroch is not a dull place, and has had many attractions."

"We all know what are the great attractions to young ladies," said Mr. Purves; "so what is the use of pretering,—and I am sure I hope you've succeeded, though I must say I should like my daughter to go out to India. I hope my daughter will be settled near home—but Jane has so many beaux. I dare say she might almost choose her place of residence. There's a Mr. Lillie, a *most delightful* young man, dancing a good deal after her just now—and *very handsome*—wears an eyeglass stuck in his eye, and has taken a seat just opposite to us in church. Jane is working the purse for him. He begged and *prayed* her to make him one, *actually* went down on his knees, if you will believe me."

Caroline did not believe Mrs. Purves, as in such circumstances she knew she was somewhat prone to romance a little, and in effect, in the present case, so far from the gentleman in question having "begged and prayed" for the purse, he had been offered it, and had gone down on his knees in mock gratitude.

"But Mr. Gordon was not the only beau, as you call it, that I met in the highlands," said Caroline; "I frequently saw two friends of yours there, Mr. Cornish and Mr. Ross."

Both mother and daughter changed countenance.

"Not friends of our Caroline, I beg to say," answered the former, becoming very red in the face; "Mr. Cornish is a proud, upsetting peacock, didn't even call after all your uncle's attention—very different from Mr. Lillie who is *most attentive*, calls two or three times *every* week. And as for Mr. Ross, I wish I had never seen him, or never heard his name. He has been *most ungrateful*, and a fine scrape him and his father

have led us all into. I wish he had been sunk in the Red Sea."

Here Mrs. Purves burst into tears. the fine airs she had assumed on Caroline's entrance completely deserted her, and she continued to sob; "I am sure I don't know what we're to do: and our furniture—our *good* furniture, that cost such a *heap* of money, is to be sold the day after to-morrow. I am sure I wish these Rosses had been *hung*, even *one* of them—I do."

"But my dear Mrs. Purves," said Agnes, "you know their loss has been the same as ours,—indeed far greater, for they were far richer."

"It does not signify, Agnes. If it had not been for them, our money would not have been our own,—and it is very easy for you to speak who have a rich brother and a hundred a year all to yourself."

Agnes was beginning gently to answer Mrs. Purves, when she was prevented by Caroline, who exclaimed indignant, "Whatever Agnes has, you might be sure she would share with papa and

And though John has been very kind to us, he has a family of his own. And besides, my uncle has his business to depend upon, while papa has nothing."

"We are going to Edinburgh," continued Agnes, in a deprecating tone; "and dear Carry intends to go out as a day-governess."

"My goodness!" ejaculated Jane,—who had maintained throughout an unmoved countenance, and who now threw back her long, oily, black curls, and opened wide her bold, staring, black eyes,—“a governess! Gracious me, I hope I am not come to that yet!”

"A governess!" cried Mrs. Purves, drying her eyes, and apparently much consoled by the intelligence. "We couldn't think of letting our Jane be a governess; but indeed, whatever the rest of us may have to do, I've no fear for her,—*none whatever*. I daresay Lillie, if she could do no better, would only be too glad to get her. And if she goes to visit Jane Green again next year, she'll have plenty of choice; but she mustn't be *quite* so ill to please this time,—as getting her settled is

more an object now ; and I must say even Lillie,—who anybody may see, with half an eye, is *dying* to get her,—is better than being a governess."

"And so you are really not going to India, after all?" said Jane, in a tone half contemptuous pity. "Well I must say I think young gentlemen have no business to go about travelling with young ladies, if they mean nothing."

There was something very painful to Caroline in hearing Malcolm spoken of in all by her aunt and cousin,—while the coarse manner in which they alluded to her intimacy with him, made her feel angry and indignant.

"I cannot tell what you mean by 'meaning nothing.' He meant to be kind and friendly, as he always is." Caroline spoke with an emotion she could not conceal, yet which she was vexed to show,—for she knew it would be misinterpreted.

"Friendly, oh!" said Jane, in a tone of contempt; "and you really lived together four months, in the same house with him, and he never got beyond being friendly. Well, really I never heard the like of this."

My goodness! I was not three days in the house with Lillie at the Haughhead,—but some people, to be sure, I don't know how it is, but I,—really Caroline, if I were you, I would hold up my head,—I would let him see that I did not care for his attentions. It is the best way to be a little high—I always am. Men are such conceited creatures; but I know how to serve them. They never give themselves airs to *me*!”

“From what we saw of Mr. Gordon,” said Agnes, mildly,—but speaking because she saw that Caroline was either vexed or angry,—“he does not seem to be a person that would give himself airs to anybody. He has been very kind to Carry, and looks upon her as his younger sister,—indeed I heard him call her so; and he praised her so both to papa and me,—and said they would all miss her so at Locharroch, as she was quite like sunshine in the house!”

Caroline had not heard this before, and her heart bounded joyfully. For the moment, she forgot all the vexing vulgarity of her relations, and thought only of Malcolm, and how he had said her pre-

sence was like sunshine. But she quickly recalled from her transient rev

"I have no *patience*," said Mrs. Pu
"with friendships, and that kind of th
between young gentlemen and ladies
keeps off other people that might c
forward,—and take my advice Caro
and, as Jane says, have more spirit
to submit to such a thing. Howeve
hope you will get him yet."

"Get him!" cried Caroline.

But Agnes dreading a skirmish,
ever anxious to keep the peace, now
to go home. They were all shaking h
when Mr. Lillie was announced. He
a slight, thin, dissipated-looking yo
man, with tolerable features, muddy c
plexion, and hair about the same colour
his skin. He wore an eyeglass in his
and there was in his whole dress and
meanour something at once low and da
fied,—and yet which did not give the
of anything ill-natured or malicious.
would have said he was foolish rather
wicked. He spoke with an affected
and a very bad imitation of an Eng
accent, and his manner towards the l

veses was familiar, patronizing and complimentary. He walked with his head protruding several inches before his body, as if he were anxiously looking for something, and ended every sentence with a loud unmeaning laugh. Such was Lillie,—that “*most gentlemanly* young man,” as Mrs. Purves called him.

“Just looked in, as I was passing, to inquire for you,—ha, ha !

“*Most kind* of you. We’re *delighted* to see you,” said Mrs. Purves.

Jane and the new-comer now exchanged salutations;—the former hoping he “was nothing the worse for the other night,—you know what I mean;” to which he replied by sundry loud laughs. They then continued to converse in the same underbred inuendo sort of style,—supplementing their meaning by various nods and knowing looks. Agnes and Caroline were thankful to make their exit, and leave this well-mannered pair to more unrestrained freedom of conversation.

At the foot of the stairs they met Mr. Purves. He was somewhat crest-fallen, and did not brazen out his mis-

fortunes so well as his wife, or even his daughter. He looked anxious and careworn, but seemed pleased to see Caroline.

"So you've got back again, Caroline. This is a bad business,—a very bad business. If I had been quite left to my own judgment, it is a business I should never have had anything to do with; but when I was in Glasgow, I allowed myself to be over-persuaded by Mr. Ross's father. But Mrs. Purves has borne it admirably,—ad-mi-ra-bly. But at my time of life to have to begin the world again is no joke. However," he continued, brightening up a little, his old self-importance beginning to revive with the sound of his own voice—the most musical of all sounds to the ears of Mr. Purves, "I have many highly influential friends." Sir John Wood said to me only the other day, says he, "Mr. Purves, I shall be glad to afford you any assistance in my power, and the Earl of Wetherstone was most gracious. The Jane, too, I hope will soon be settled,—indeed, with her beauty and fashionable

manners, not to mention the advantages she has had in the way of education and society, there can be no doubt she will soon have a good offer. Did you leave our young friend Lillie up-stairs,—a rather stylish young man—speaks remarkably well.”

Agnes answered that they did.

Mr. Purves replied by a “Ha” of satisfaction; adding, “Our friends do not desert us in our misfortunes.” Then, turning to Caroline, he said with a patronising nod, and having now almost quite recovered his former consequential air, “I hope you’ll not stick long in the market either, Carry. I heard something about a gentleman coming home with you from the north. The Wetherstone people have got the whole story quite pat already; it was a good deal talked about in the market yesterday. The Haughhead people have it that you are to be married in June, and go out to India in August. I am sure I’ll be very glad if it’s true,—Mrs. Irvine Gordon’s brother, I believe, a Calcutta merchant.”

Caroline eagerly disclaimed there be any truth in the report. She was annoyed and disgusted by her uncle's speech, and yet she was not so indignant at him as at her aunt and cousin, coarse though his ideas and expressions were, they were evidently accompanied by good-will towards herself,—more than could be said for the hints and questions of his wife and daughter.

The sisters were very glad to be more out of the house on their way homewards.

"That is a disagreeable duty well over," said Caroline.

"I am glad we went, though," answered Agnes.

"Odious, tattling Wetherstone!" claimed Caroline, after a few minutes silence; "I am almost glad that we are going to leave it."

"Oh, no! Carry, dear; surely you are not glad we are going to leave dear Wallacefield. And as to that gossip you are annoyed at, what does it signify, when there is no truth in it? Mr. Malcom Gordon is a very nice, kind young man."

but as to your falling in love with him, even if you were old enough, that is quite out of the question,—and your going to India quite impossible.”

“Impossible, indeed,” thought Caroline; “and so it is better after all as it is.” She found it difficult, however, to repress the rising sigh,—and she next began to wonder why Agnes thought her falling in love with him was out of the question; but somehow or other she did not like to ask.

The last day that the Irvines were to remain at Wallacefield had now arrived. All the morning Agnes and Caroline had been very busy; but by four o'clock, when they had dinner, the bustle was nearly over. They were a sad, silent party. Nobody could eat, yet each one pretended to be eating for the sake of the others. It was the uppermost thought of the whole party, though not one of them alluded to the subject, that this was their last dinner at Wallacefield.

Peggy waited at table, with the corner of her apron at her eyes the whole time, while she was constantly making all sorts

of mistakes, such as handing bread instead of beer, setting down potatoes where mutton chops ought to have been, and *vice versa* mistakes for which she was rebuked by the Major with unwonted asperity. But as she remarked to Wattie afterwards, "Puir man! it was na out o' ill nature, but jist because he was vexed to see me greetin, and didna want to let on, though I ken weel he could ha grutten hisself. Wae's me! but my heart's sair for the a'!"

After dinner the Major sat down in his old accustomed easy chair, and, probably from grief, fell fast asleep.

Caroline noticed sadly that, as he slept, he looked much older than he had ever appeared to do before. His face seemed longer and thinner, the lines deeper and stronger, while the expression was marked by an air of dejection very different from the vigour and spirit, almost like that of youth, which had formerly distinguished him. Caroline's heart felt saddened by the sight; but she trusted that when the partings were all over, and he was removed from the presence of those dear famili-

objects, the sight of which was now only a source of pain, he would recover his wonted cheerfulness. She felt, too, that his cheerfulness would depend greatly upon hers, and she prayed silently, but oh, how fervently! that she might be enabled, for his dear sake, to bear up against all, even against her long, perhaps perpetual separation from Malcolm Gordon.

Agnes, who was fatigued by the labours of the day, had now also seated herself and taken out of her pocket a piece of knitting, which she always carried there, to be ready when she was too tired to be able, or when it was too dark to see, to do anything else.

Caroline could neither knit nor sleep, and to sit there so still and silent seemed too oppressively sad to be borne. Suddenly it struck her that it would be a good opportunity to take a few farewell turns on her favourite walk, at the foot of the lawn by the river's side. No sooner had the idea come into her head, than she hastened to put it into execution.

It had been a mild spring-like February

day, and now towards its close the sky was clear, yet not frosty, and the sun went down in gentle and cloudless majesty. Although the weather was now almost warm, the winter, as we know, had been severe, and there was yet no spring upon the grass, no leaf-buds on the trees. The river ran as clear as crystal, and even the deep still pool beneath the bending ash-tree, though dark as ebony, was clear as the eye of an eastern houri. But soon, the soft blue sky, and the cold glancing river,—the whole scene became in the twilight calmness and quietness, almost like a landscape painted in Indian ink. Few plants had yet pierced the soft brown mould; yet some tufts of snowdrops displayed their delicate white blossoms, and a wallflower growing beside the ash-tree was actually fragrant. On this same ash-tree, too, was perched a blackbird, which now filled the still air with strains of the softest, sweetest melody.

Caroline paced up and down for some little time, able to think of nothing save that it was her last walk there. She

strained her eyes, as if to devour with them every object within sight, that in case she should behold it no more, its minutest features might be impressed on her memory for ever. Then she stood still, to watch for the last time, as she had often watched before, the broad beautiful river gliding swiftly past ; and as she gazed on it her heart swelled and her tears flowed as if it were the face of a beloved friend, which her eyes were to look on no more ; for Caroline loved her native stream, even as I love thee, my own beautiful river ! that art even now making music in my ears, that sung my lullaby in my cradle, and that, I trust, will murmur a requiem by my grave !

As Caroline stood thus, there came palpably before her memory many special times connected with the scene on which she was gazing. Not that anything especially noteworthy had occurred on those occasions ; yet, somehow or other, they stood out clearly from the past, while much that was of equal or greater importance lay dim in the hazy distance, or lost altogether amid the shadows of the by-gone time.

It has often been a puzzle to me, and doubt to many besides, how certain trivial circumstances will sometimes make an impression on the memory which seems to be altogether ineffaceable; while other circumstances which we wish, and even strenuously endeavour to fix there, escape us in spite of all our efforts to retain and recall them. Can it be that there are certain moments when the brain is in a more impressionable state than at other times, so that the pictures then imprinted upon it become indelible? as on the memory itself, dissociated from that earthly frame which is at once its instrument and its clog, all images and ideas undoubtedly remain for ever. But be that as it may, certainly it is, that scenes long past were now more vividly present to the mind of Catherine Irvine—that day, for instance, long ago, when she was playing with her doll on the bank, and there seemed a peculiar brightness on one particular ripple of the stream that she could have pointed out even now,—another day, when she saw a large white pebble at the bottom of the water which she wished to get,

durst not try to reach, as she had promised Agnes never, on any account, to go within a certain distance of the brink. Then there was one evening by moonlight in particular that she remembered distinctly from all the other evenings by moonlight, why she could not tell, and one morning before breakfast, and last of all there was the evening before she went to Locharroch. She began to think that this was the first time she had walked here since then, and what changes had taken place in the brief period which had elapsed ! Then she had been but a child open to each passing impression, with nothing to do but enjoy each hour as it came and went,—now she was a woman, who must think and act for herself in the great drama of life, a busy though a humble part in which she was now called on to perform. And then she remembered the thoughts, unwonted in their seriousness, which had filled her mind on that evening, and which now seemed to her to have contained a prophecy of the present. As she had then suggested to Agnes, as a mere passing thought, the old life was over, and they

were never to live in the old way at Wal lacefield any more. The still stream of existence was passed, and she had now entered on the rapid current. The placid happiness, the sunny, unreflective mirth of her childhood was over, the depths of her nature was stirred up, and the stronger emotions, the harsher buffetings of life were now dashing and hurrying her on wards to the great ocean. And Caroline's last moment in her favourite haunt, her last moment alone in her old home, was hallowed by an earnest prayer, a solemn dedication of herself and all her powers to the work that lay before her ; and as she turned her tearful eyes to the strong rolling river she loved so dearly, her last aspiration was, "Thy will be done, oh our Father in heaven !" And not daring to cast even one lingering glance behind, she hurried back to the house.

It was now the hour "'atween the gloaming and the mirk," and the light blue sky was growing every instant deeper in shade. The little white bells of the snowdrops alone glimmered clear in the deepening dusk, which, as it crept on, insensibly

melted all other objects into one indistinctness. Caroline had to pass through a small patch of shrubbery, interspersed with a few trees, on her way to the house. Among these trees, growing close by the walk, there was a mountain-ash, of which she had always remarked that her father was peculiarly careful, and which he never allowed any one to prune but himself. As she now approached this tree she saw a tall figure, which, from the bald forehead and thin silvery hair, she recognised to be his, bending beneath it. She drew back hastily, as she had a sort of instinctive feeling that he must wish to be unobserved. The slight noise she made, however, attracted his attention, and turning round he asked, in an accent as if displeased or irritated by the intrusion,

“Is any one there?”

“It is I, papa,” she answered, gently.

“You, my darling,” he rejoined, in the soft tone he generally used when speaking to her. “Come here, my little Carry, and help me to get up this?”

She approached, and found that he was

trying to disengage from the parent stock an offshoot of the mountain-ash.

"I would have allowed no one to help me with this but you, Caroline," he said.

She only answered by a look of inquiry.

He continued, with a quivering lip and a voice which perceptibly trembled,

"This tree was planted by your angel mother and myself, to celebrate the first anniversary of our happy marriage, and we were very happy as we planted it. I said to my Caroline then, how well I remember, though it is so long ago, 'When I am in my grave, Caroline, you will sometimes think of me, particularly on our wedding-day.' And she answered with tears in her beautiful blue eyes, with her sweet winning voice, just like your own, my motherless darling, 'I will, indeed, my dearest husband, if I am the last;' but though she said that, I saw she thought with me that so it would be. Little did I think that the next anniversary I should be standing alone by the tree we had planted, while my young wife

was mouldering away in her grave ; as little as I thought then that I should ever live to see her poor baby a woman like herself. I am now taking this shoot to plant in our little back-green in Edinburgh. The tree I shall never see again, nor this place, where I was so happy with Caroline ; but remember, when I die, I am to be brought here, that I may sleep beside my angel. Promise me, my dear Caroline's child ?”

And solemnly and tearfully she gave the promised request ; and then the father and daughter, with full hearts, and hands locked in one another's, walked together in silence to the house. But as they walked, the young girl could feel that the old man's gait was feebler, and his tread less firm, than in times not long gone by.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN the course of a week or two, Irvines were settled in Edinburgh. Malcolm had taken a small house for them in Ann-street, which united the advantage of a moderate rent and a pleasant situation,—being on the very verge of the town and yet within an easy distance of the fashionable quarter, thus affording at once comfortable access to the best streets and abundant facilities of indulging in rambles in the beautiful country around. There was also a small plot of ground between the house and the street, separated from the latter by a railing, in which Watson thought it might be possible to rear a few of the commoner flowers, while a corner was espied in the little *back-green* which

would exactly suit the mountain-ash. All this was discovered ere they had had time to inspect the house, with which they were all determined to be pleased. The ground-floor was first looked at. The furniture was very plain but comfortable, and the whole party were amazed at the order everything was in. Nothing seemed to have been forgotten, and Caroline's heart swelled at each new proof of Malcolm's consideration. At last she and Agnes ran up to the drawing-room. Here an unexpected sight awaited them. All Agnes's chairs and ottomans and cushions ranged in due order about the room! Agnes's pale face flushed with pleasure and surprise. Till she saw the unwonted agitation her sister displayed at this unexpected recovery of her handiwork, Caroline had had no idea of the extent to which she had felt her loss. She could now better appreciate the fortitude poor Agnes had previously shown. "After all," she thought, "if I had been able to do a number of fine paintings, I should have been greatly grieved to lose them, and this furniture is the same to Agnes

as the paintings would have been to me. A note was now discovered lying on the top of the large ottoman. It was from Catherine, begging Agnes to accept the furniture as a slight testimony of her sisterly regard.

"How very, very kind of dear Catherine," said Agnes, "to think of her making me such a present. If it had been you, Caroline, I should not have been so much surprised. How very kind!"

"Very kind," echoed Caroline; "and how kind of Malcolm," she thought; for remembering their conversation at Wallacefield, she did not doubt that it was his representations which had induced Mrs. Gordon to make this present. But a new proof of his kindness now met her eyes. Their attention had at first been so entirely absorbed by the recovered worsted work that they had had no time to remark the rest of the furniture. But now, as Caroline glanced round, the first object her eyes alighted upon was a small but very handsome cottage-piano, placed between the two windows. Surprised, delighted, and agitated by a hope she durst not acknow-

ledge, she quickly approached, and found a note—yes, a note from Malcolm! It was the first note she had ever received from him, and her fingers trembled so, that for a second or two she could not open it. At last, however, she managed to break the seal. It was short, but full of unpretending kindness. He begged her to accept the piano in memory of the many happy hours in which he had listened to her music, and he hoped that sometimes when she was playing upon it she would remember the brother, who might then be far away over the Indian ocean, and who, in his solitary exile, would often think of his kind young sister. He concluded by reminding her of her promise to write.

“Oh, Agnes!” cried Caroline, as soon as she was able to speak, “did you ever know any one so kind as Malcolm?”

“He is very kind, my love; but I am not astonished that any one should be kind to you, Carry? After living so long in the same house as you did, he must have got much attached to you; but I am quite different. I really cannot think

enough of Catherine—so very generous and thoughtful of her. But let us tell papa.”

The Major was quite as much delighted as his daughters. It would have been difficult to say by which of the presents he was the more charmed.

“I am very much pleased, indeed, with Catherine,” he said; “she makes John a good wife, and shows a proper affection for John’s sister; and her brother really seems a steady excellent young man, with his heart in the right place. Very sensible notions he has about India. I got him to understand at once about the disposition of the troops in the Deccan in the 179—, which I never could make anybody but my poor Caroline, who understood everything, comprehend before, and he was quite of my opinion about Carry—not like these Purveses, who will never recognise my child’s superiority just in the same way that they would never recognise her mother’s. How my Caroline ever happened to be related to these people is what I could never understand!”

The Irvines had not been many days

settled in Ann-street, when Caroline received a letter from Violet Smythe, now Mrs. Arthur Cornish. It was dated from Harbury, and commenced with expressions of sympathy for the loss of fortune which had been sustained by Caroline and her family, of which the writer had only heard that morning. Violet then continued: "But it is not, my dearest friend,—for with one exception, you are my dearest friend on earth,—merely to make barren professions of regard that I now write. I wish to serve you, Caroline, and I trust you will accept my services in the same spirit in which they are offered—the spirit of friendly equality, where there is no obligation on either side but only to love. In a letter I had from Isabella Ross yesterday, she mentions that she has heard that you intend taking a situation as governess. Let me beg of you, my dear Caroline, to abandon this notion, and instead, come to live with me. My husband and I are about to form an establishment of our own, and as we shall chiefly reside in the country, I shall of course spend some part of each

day alone, and shall be very much the better for a companion. Now my proposal is that you should come to live with me as my friend and sister,—the only sister I ever had. I cannot help thinking that you would be happier with us than as a governess, and the favour would be all on your side. Arthur, too, is very anxious that you should agree to this proposal. He has a very sincere regard and admiration for you, and nothing in his manner ever led you to imagine otherwise, it arose solely from a belief on his part that you were on my side against him. Dear Caroline, I am far happier than I deserved to be, happier than I dared to hope. A feeling of remorse for the wrong I have done alone disturbs my happiness, which would otherwise be perfect. In justice to Arthur, I must say that he has proved all that long ago I used to believe him. But that does not excuse *me*. I have been rash and headstrong throughout—unforgiving to Arthur, treacherous to another, cruel to myself. Tell me how *he* is when you write, Caroline. But t

return to yourself, If you will not come to live with me,—which, however, I hope you will be prevailed upon to do; let me know how I can help you. I shall be too happy to do so in any way, and any assistance that you will do me the friendship to accept, shall be from myself alone; for with Arthur's usual generosity, he insisted that all my fortune should be settled on myself. Do not be long in answering this letter, as I am very anxious to hear from you. Arthur begs to be most kindly remembered to you; and with my own best love, I am ever, your most affectionate friend,

“VIOLET CORNISH.”

Caroline had not heard from Violet since her marriage, and she was very glad to receive this letter, and much touched by its kindness, although at the same time very glad to have it in her power to say that she required no assistance, and had never thought, never could think, of leaving her father. It gave her sincere pleasure, too, to find that Violet was, or at least believed herself to be, happy; but

young and sanguine though Caroline was and indisposed by temperament to take a gloomy view of things, she could feel no confidence in the stability of this happiness, no faith in the goodness of Arthur Cornish. She could not divest herself of an idea that he had no real generosity, and that self was in all things his ruling motive. He was not avaricious, and therefore in money matters he was probably liberal, but he had none of the true generosity for which self-denial is only another name. His love, his pride, his liberality were all alike selfish, and Caroline had an instinctive feeling that her friend's sole chance of happiness lay in the possibility of her continuing to be able to minister to his amusement, or to the gratification of his selfishness in one way or another. She could not avoid suspecting that what Violet termed his "constancy" was in some degree at least owing to the pride which would not submit to be repulsed, and which was determined to triumph either by conquest or by a show of indifference. His whole conduct had shown he had no true affec-

tion. Caroline endeavoured to turn her thoughts from the subject, for she felt that it was a painful one. She answered Violet's letter the next day, responding to the wish of the latter that the correspondence might be regularly continued.

In the course of a few weeks the Irvines began to have a home feeling towards Edinburgh. They had had several visitors,—a few old Indian acquaintances of the Major's, and one or two families, chiefly friends and connections of Mrs. Gordon's. From all, they experienced much kindness, and considerable attention. It is not true, as we frequently find it asserted, that the world always turns its back upon the unfortunate. That a portion of the world generally does so, is true enough; but the magnitude of this portion depends greatly on the characters of those who in brighter days have been *chosen* for associates. If those who have chosen their society, solely from the means that society possesses of ministering to a taste for vanity and pomp, are neglected when they can no

longer contribute their quota to general ostentation, they need not be surprised, and have certainly no right to complain. As we have sowed so shall we reap, and we cannot expect to gather grapes of thistles, or that friendship and benevolence will spring from selfishness and worldliness. Generally, I do not always, those who deserve affection and respect obtain it; and dignified, and deserved misfortune generally meets with no consideration—even from persons who are not themselves altogether free from the taint of worldliness. Some, it is true, show this attention in a coarse, patronising way, hurtful to the feelings of those who receive it; still it is well meant, and the coarseness arises rather from that want of sensibility which nothing can teach, than from any want of an intention to be kind. In general persons of this class, had they been unfortunate, would not have felt hurt at the conduct such as their own on the part of another. They do as they would be done by, and what can they do more? But be that as it may, certain it is that

many persons were almost officiously polite to the Irvines. Caroline had many invitations.

“ We must ask Caroline Irvine, poor thing. Girls at her time of life enjoy a little amusement, and one is glad of an opportunity to be civil to one in her situation.”

But gradually Caroline Irvine began to be asked for her own sake, and not out of mere compassion. She was so agreeable, so ready to please and to be pleased, that she became an almost universal favourite. Few among the beauties and heiresses had a greater number of partners than the little governess. Not, however, that she went to many parties; she had but little time for gaiety, and knowing how dearly her father prized her company, and how little now he had of it, she never accepted an invitation but at his particular request—when he said; “ I wish you would go, my treasure. I cannot bear to see you deny yourself all amusement for my sake. There will be nothing so pretty there as my sweet wild rose.”

About a month after her arrival in Edinburgh, Caroline had obtained a situation as day-governess in the family of Mrs. Hunter, the widow of a landed proprietor in one of the eastern counties, who resided in Edinburgh, ostensibly for the benefit of her children's education, but really because Shairpridge was a very desirable place, and Mrs. Hunter was fond of company. She was a woman about thirty-four years of age, had been very pretty, and though somewhat *passée*, had still claims to admiration, and looked very well by candlelight. She was a little woman, decidedly under the average height, with a small, round, elegant figure, and always exquisitely dressed; indeed, it would have been surprising had she not been so, as she spent six hours every day at her toilet while it was certainly the chief subject of her thoughts. Her complexion was fair and her colour bright; her features smooth and regular, but as entirely devoid of expression as it is possible to imagine. Her eyes, which were her worst feature, were small and grey; her hair, a yellow

tinge of flaxen, but soft, fine, and shining.

With regard to her mental and moral qualities, there is but little to describe; one could not positively call her either bad or good; her character was altogether about as unmeaning as could well be. Yet there was never anybody in the world, however common-place, that did not possess something to distinguish him or her from others,—no character, however seemingly colourless, without some light or shade. Mrs. Hunter was generally denominated, “a very sweet woman,” which reputation for sweetness she probably owed to a perpetual simper, which adorned her small, unmeaning mouth on all occasions indifferently. She was as fond of her children as she could be of anything, and spoiled them by her weak indulgence; for she possessed so little mind that her affections were of the lowest quality—the mere instincts of a vain, good-natured fool.

Mrs. Hunter was also a very great gossip. All the morning, when she was not dressing, she spent in paying visits, acquiring and spreading news regarding

marriages, flirtations, dinner-parties, ing-parties; who had, and who had omitted to be invited; who was off and who were on speaking terms; and not to mention such pieces of intelligence as how Miss M. had actually come again this season in the same old ball she had last year, and Mrs. L. had a new diamond brooch.

Mrs. Hunter, though she had a remarkably good jointure, was by no means inclined to a second marriage, and probably would ere this have succeeded in forming one, had it not been for her *encumbrances*. Such was the lady, the mental guardian of whose children was committed to the care of Caroline Irvine. They were pretty little girls, one of whom was more intelligent than Caroline could have supposed any daughter of Mrs. Hunter likely to be; while the other two, though rather dull, were not so wayward and selfish as the foolish indulgence they had met with would have led her to expect.

Teaching was at first very up-hill work to Caroline; but by degrees, as she began to make some progress in gaining

affections and opening the minds of her pupils, she became interested in it, and in them. The lessons ceased to be irksome, the daily walk to be fatiguing, and she learned as much as she taught. She became a prime favourite with Mrs. Hunter, who, seeing that the children were happy with her, was glad to be relieved from all care about them, and very willingly committed them entirely to her guidance. Mrs. Hunter now, by way of amusement, took to patronizing her governess in the most furious manner,—told everybody what a treasure she was, so clever and lady-like, so well-connected, and so unlike persons of her class in general. “I regard her quite as a friend; I shall make a point of having her at all my parties; and I shall insist on all the young men dancing with her. I hope I shall get her well married, as, though she would be a great loss to me, it is very desirable, particularly for a person in her situation. I have thought of one or two very nice young men, whom I shall make a point of having to meet her.”

Such was the style in which Mrs.

Hunter spoke of Caroline. To her was at once patronising and caresses, addressing her by her Christian name, telling her all her news, and exhibiting to her all her dresses, and even making her the confidante of her various friendships, and the innumerable compliments which were paid to her,—some of them it struck her young auditor, anything so flattering to the understanding of a person to whom they were addressed. Caroline was sometimes amused, though occasionally wearied, by the confidence of her patroness. Mrs. Hunter allowed her two hours in the middle of the day for her lesson in drawing, and she rose early the morning, to practise it for two or three hours before breakfast. Altogether, her life was a laborious, but not an unhappy one.

Pleasant it was, when the day's labours were over, to come home for the evening to her father and Agnes, to tell and to hear the news of the day. Pleasant to feel that she was not leading a useless life. Pleasant to meet, wherever she went, with affection and kindness. Pleasant, in the fine summer evening

wander out with her dear ones, till the moon rose over the hills and the houses, and the revolving lights on the Forth shone like stars on the deep. Pleasant, in the cool, shadowy twilight, to sing the old Scotch ballads, or play the martial airs her father loved, on the piano Malcolm had given. And pleasanter, dearer than all, though mingled with a sort of vague pain, which yet seemed akin to the highest bliss, was it to think of the donor! But this was a subject of meditation in which Caroline durst not too much indulge, as it sometimes tended to make all other subjects seem dull and vapid.

Caroline felt that it was, perhaps, wisely ordered for her happiness that her time and thoughts should be so much occupied—that she should have been forced to exert herself. In spite of the unbounded kindness of her father and sister, she was sometimes conscious now in their society of a want, a sort of vacuum, which in former days she had never experienced. In Malcolm's company, while she felt her best feelings called forth, she was conscious also that a spur was given to her mental

faculties. She felt, in his absence, as if some stimulus had been removed from her life,—as if not only could nothing have for her the same interest as when he was present, but as if she herself were deprived of the power to see, feel, and understand with the same intensity and clearness. Her mind which, in his presence, had bloomed like a flower in the air and the sunshine giving forth beauty and fragrance, seemed suddenly as if it had been transplanted to some stifling mine or chilly dungeon. Yet she did not indulge in vain repinings. She felt that God had blessed her existence with various duties and many pleasures and that if she, too, was not without her share of trials, it were alike ungrateful and unwise to aggravate them by the indulgence of a morbid sentimentalism. She recognized the truth, that though to all nobler spirits sympathy is a chief joy yet, in time of need, they must know how to live alone. Nevertheless, the feeling to which I have alluded was no evanescent feeling, but deep and enduring, though borne with fortitude. Gradually, however, she came to regard the period of her high

land visit as "the golden age" of her life, a beautiful, romantic period, which could come but once, and was now finally superseded by work-day realities. Though she could hope to feel no more as she had done then, she could yet go on bravely and cheerfully, giving God thanks alike for the present and the past, and trusting in Him for the future. "It shall not make me unhappy," she said to herself; "no, though it can never be again, the reflection of its happiness shall shine over all my present and my future, to make me happier and stronger; and whatever difficulties may yet be to come, I pray to God that He may uphold me, that I faint not, but remember that sorrow, as well as joy, may be a blessing; and surely I have felt this already."

But Caroline was not the only member of the family who was reconciled to the change of circumstances. Agnes worked almost as cheerfully in Ann-street as she had done at Wallacefield, and was surrounded, as usual, by tidiness and tastefulness. The Major had discovered several old friends, and found, in a lounge with

them, a substitute for the pleasures afforded by his garden. Both he and Agnes frequently declared, that if Caroline were only a little more at home, and were not kept so very busy, they should be quite happy. But as she seemed happy, and looked in good health and spirits, they were contented, and, if possible, thought more highly of her than ever.

Major Irvine had said truly, that it was not on his own account, but upon Caroline's, who by their losses had been rendered penniless, that he grieved. Strong to face mere outward evils, and to endure physical hardships, where his affections were concerned he was weaker than any woman ; if, indeed, women be so very weak. The idea of his darling child, so tenderly nurtured, so fondly cherished, battling her way in the rough, cold world, and fading, pining, and fainting beneath the harsh cares and labours of life, had completely unmanned him. He had not that strength of mind which can support another under circumstances of misfortune. He was overwhelmed by the sight of suffering of any kind in one whom he loved ; and as his first Caroline,

even in the valley of the shadow of death, had striven to comfort him for the loss of herself, so it was now the part of his second Caroline to comfort him for the distress, caused solely by concern for the hardship and labour to which his own affection and imprudence had exposed her. And she did so, not only by seeming, but by being happy. It was for her at once an additional motive for exertion, and, in the success this exertion achieved, a new source of satisfaction and gratitude.

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CHAPTER IX.

ONE Saturday morning, in the month of June—a holiday with Caroline—when she was busy painting in a little room with a skylight, which, half in sport, she called her “studio,” she was informed by Peggy that a young lady in the drawing-room wished to see her. Caroline ran down-stairs, and found, to her surprise, Isabella Ross. After they had embraced each other, Caroline inquired when Isabella had come to Edinburgh, and if she were on a visit.

“We came a week or two ago; and we have come to live, not in Edinburgh but Leith; papa has got a situation there, worth four or five hundred a year. A sad change for us, Caroline, but it cannot be helped;

and if we only lived in Edinburgh, I should not much mind. The railway, however, is very convenient for coming up, and we have got a nice, comfortable house on the Links—of course we have no carriage now—and I hope we shall see a great deal of you. Now that we are quite settled, we shall have a little gaiety; we are thinking of a pic-nic to Inchcolm some day, and we are going to have a little dance immediately. Willie has got acquainted with several of the officers of the —th Dragoons, now at Piershill; and oh! by-the-bye, George Smythe, Violet's brother, has just purchased a company in that regiment. It was through him Willie got acquainted with them; he was dining at the mess yesterday, and says they are delightful young men—and Willie, you know, is very fastidious. And, would you really believe it, Caroline? he has begun the most dreadful flirtation already with a Miss Christison—Jessie Christison—rather a pretty girl, with a great deal of colour, and auburn hair—ten times worse, even, than with Christian Buchanan or Helen Wilson; Willie is *such* a flirt! But, by-

the-bye, I have never had time to ask you. I hear you have got a situation; I hope you are comfortable. I am so sorry, dear Caroline."

Caroline replied that she was quite comfortable and happy; and then inquired for Maria.

"A great deal better, thank you, Caroline; indeed, at the time of our losses, you would not have thought there was very much the matter with her, she exerted herself so much, and was such a comfort to mamma. Really, it was wonderful what she did,—and she talked of our beginning a school; however, fortunately, there is no occasion for that now. But since we came to Leith, she has not been in such good spirits; she has begun again to lie on the sofa, and heave sighs, and read poetry. She declines mixing in society, and says the Leith people are quite as uncongenial as the Glasgow. She walks a good deal alone on the sands, and I hear some young man has fallen in love with her, but she says love in this world is over for her. She showed me a poem she had been writing about something of that kind

the other day, but I have no taste for poetry; but Willie says it is 'touchingly withering'—at least, I think that was what he said; at any rate, he meant it was very fine. She sends her love to you, and says she would have called, but cannot bear to be seen in the street. However, if you will, as I hope, come to a little party we are to have next Friday, you shall see her, as I think we shall be able to prevail upon her to appear; though she declares; if she does, she will wear nothing but black. Could not you come to dinner, dear Caroline, for the sake of old times?" Caroline consented, on condition of obtaining leave of Mrs. Hunter.

That lady was by no means obdurate, and agreed at once to allow Caroline the few hours she requested. She then asked millions of questions about the Rosses, and spent more than half an hour balancing pros and cons whether she should call on them; for Mrs. Hunter's rapacity for new acquaintances was wellnigh unbounded, and was only checked by the absolute necessity of having a visiting-list unexceptionable in point of gentility.

“The Rosses,—I think I have heard of them; but I hardly know any west country people. One can never be certain that these Glasgow people are quite *comme il faut*,—and then living at Leith! Yet, my dearest Caroline, friends of yours, and the late proprietor of Ardennan. Did you hear who you were to meet?”

“Some of the officers from Piershill. No one else was mentioned.”

“The officers,—a very gentlemanly set. I met some of them last night at Lord Westfield’s. One of the lieutenants is a cousin of Mrs. Westfield: but officers go anywhere they are invited. Bring me word, Caroline, like a dear, if there was anybody there but Leith people. And, oh! by-the-bye, I wonder if Captain Smythe will be there. I hope he will, for your sake,—such a delightful, handsome creature!—one of the —th. Helen Westfield fell in love with him at first sight.”

“Captain Smythe is to be there,” Caroline replied; “he is the son of an old friend of Mr. Ross, who was one of his guardians, and the brother of a dear friend of mine.”

"Dear me!" cried Mrs. Hunter, to whom any little piece of news or gossip, even concerning persons of whom she had never heard, was an excitement only inferior to the purchase of a new dress or bonnet; "a sister of Smythe's an intimate friend of yours! He told me last night that he had a sister married to the heir-apparent of a fine estate, and one of the oldest baronetcies in England. I suppose she is not your friend?"

"Yes, the same,—Mrs. Arthur Cornish."

Mrs. Hunter opened her little grey eyes as wide as she possibly could, and then smiled her sweetest.

"You don't mean so?—really! My sweetest Caroline, to think of your having a friend of that kind and not telling *me*. You might have known how glad I should have been for your sake, you dear, naughty girl."

"A friend of *what* kind?" asked Caroline, hardly able to repress a laugh.

"So delightful and so advantageous for a young person to have friends of that kind. Now tell me all about it, how you got acquainted with her, and managed to

become friends. Do let us have a cosy chat; and then, before you and the children go out, you shall see my new dove-coloured dress and white lace bonnet. I had got quite tired of that old pink crape thing. Now, tell me about Mrs. Cornish."

"I have little to tell," answered Caroline, Mrs. Hunter being about the last person in the world she would have chosen to make her confidante. "I became acquainted with her in the highlands last autumn, when she was visiting the Rosses at Ardennan."

"The Rosses! I think I must call on the Rosses. And yet,—no, I think I shan't. Stay,—I have thought of something. You shall ask the young ladies to my next party, and I shall tell Captain Smythe myself—for Smythe and I got great friends at once,—to bring the brother; and then, if they take, I shall call upon the family. One ought to call upon strangers. But now, do tell me something more about that charming Mrs. Cornish."

Caroline complied by telling her patroness all she thought it safe to communicate,

and by giving a description of Violet's person and style of dress. Mrs. Hunter was more and more enraptured ; and then, in return for the intelligence she had received, began to hint at a benevolent scheme which had just been generated in her sage and fertile brain.

"They say young Smythe is very wealthy. What a capital match he would be! I shall make a point of you and he being a great deal together. I shall have him at all my parties next winter ; for, as the regiment has only just come, it will not likely be moved before next spring. And you are a great friend of his sister's ! There is no saying what may happen. I should be so glad to get you well married. You may depend on my doing everything in my power."

"Indeed, my dear Mrs. Hunter, I do not wish to be married. Thank you for your kind intentions," she added, merrily.

"Oh ! no young ladies want to be married, if you are to believe themselves. But I am a better friend than to take you at your word ; and I shall do all I can," she added, with a silly simper ; and then

rising and nodding her head with a wilful, child-like waywardness,—a pretty air which had been very captivating at eighteen, but which, at five-and-thirty, had lost much of its becomingness,—she continued, “leave me to manage,—leave it all to me. I must have my own way,—I must and shall. And now you must come to see my sweet, dove-coloured dress.”

But Caroline had not only to look at the dove-coloured dress, but at a green one, and a purple one, and a pink one, trimmed with black lace, and at least a dozen others, altogether composing but a small part of Mrs. Hunter’s wardrobe, the list of which was “longer and longer than I can tell.” These *tête-à-tête* interviews with Mrs. Hunter were often very irksome to Caroline; but, weighing the advantages and disadvantages of her situation, she felt that altogether it was not likely she should obtain a better; and besides, she was attached to the children. She determined, therefore, to make the best of it, and if she could derive no profit from the conversation of her patroness, to find what

amusement she could, that she might not be altogether wearied by it. As she sat under a tree this afternoon in the Heriot-row Gardens, while the children were playing on the grass, she began to compare the characters of Mrs. Hunter and Isabella Ross, which had struck her as bearing no little resemblance to each other. Both belonged to the common-place order of women. Had the whole sex been like them, Pope might have had more excuse for saying,

“ Most women have no characters at all.”

And yet even they were not alike ; for, while Isabella was the most humble-minded, good-natured being in the world, looking up to her sister Maria with a sort of wondering reverence as something far superior to herself, and, indeed, having altogether a low opinion of herself, without, however, being mortified by it in the smallest degree, almost without being conscious of it, Mrs. Hunter gave herself all the airs of a beauty, and evidently considered herself of very great consequence. While in German philosophical slang, her gossip

was frequently subjective, Isabella's was almost invariably objective. Accustomed, moreover, from childhood to good, or at least *genteel* society, Mrs. Hunter was much more at ease than Isabella, who, on company occasions, always laboured under the fear of committing herself in some way or other; so that it could not be said, even of these two somewhat mindless women, that they had absolutely "no character at all."

Sometimes we short-sighted mortals are apt to impute to a defect in nature that which is in reality a deficiency in ourselves. Ought it not to have struck a truly great man,—for all the truly great are truly humble,—that the, to him, apparent want of character in women, was, perhaps, but the want in himself of the power to appreciate it. Fine distinctions are as real as coarse ones; but it requires finer eyes to discern them. Prominent situations bring out prominently the features of character; secluded, or apparently unimportant situations, hide them, at least from those who are not gifted to read the moral meaning that each so-called trifle

carries with it, not less than the greatest act that was ever performed on the theatre of public life. In short, nothing can be more false, from beginning to end, than this essay on "The Characters of Women." For instance :

" In men we various ruling passions find :
In women, two almost divide the kind ;
Those only fix'd, they first or last obey,
The love of pleasure or the love of sway."

This is utterly and entirely false ; it is the mere sign-post design of a woman, though coloured by the hand of a master. Though different in texture, and widely different in *direction*, the compass of a woman's passions, like the compass of her faculties, is as varied as that of a man. Her mind, like her person, is as complete, as symmetrical as that of a man, similar, yet not the same ; and more especially is this true of her moral nature. In both is there the same human heart. If masculine painters of character would treasure this truth, their feminine portraits would be much more successful than they generally are ; for, except by genius of the first class, that class which sees into nature's

inmost spirit, women never have been faithfully painted by men; not from incapacity certainly, but from the fatal misconception that they must paint a creature entirely different from themselves, instead of one almost, if not altogether, similar. It is only from the inspiration given by our own hearts that we can interpret the heart of another human being,—be that other man or woman; and it would be well if, in the latter case as in the former, men would dare to trust to the sole means they possess for being true to nature. If not entirely accurate, we should at least have real human beings, whom it would be possible to love or hate, to feel for and with, instead of the present conventional man's woman, who, whether she be angel or fiend, is equally impersonal and automaton-like; and this often even in the works of authors who paint their own sex to the life. And now, gentleman reader, if such should indeed condescend to peruse these pages, remember I have made an exception in favour of the highest genres; and remember also, lest I should appear

somewhat presumptuous, this is a subject upon which, from its very nature, women must be the best judges. And you, gentlemen authors, take my strictures in good part, for they are given with all humility, and with an earnest consciousness of my own manifold short-comings.

CHAPTER X.

ON the day before that which Caroline was to spend at Leith, Malcolm arrived to pay his promised visit in Ann-street. He had written to announce his intention a day or two before his arrival, and it had been arranged that he was to accompany Caroline to the Ross's party. Caroline was glad to perceive that Malcolm's spirits seemed much improved. He had just returned from a trip to the Hebrides and the Island of Arran. He was looking well and fresh, and was not only cheerful, but occasionally very gay; yet Caroline saw plainly that he had not forgotten. She saw, although perhaps no one else would have seen, that he winced as he was told he was to meet Captain Smythe, the

brother of Mrs. Cornish, at Mrs. Ross's, and she saw too how certain words, certain melodies, and certain ideas were associated with the past; for Caroline seemed to know, as if by a sort of clairvoyance, whenever he was thinking of his lost love; yet none but herself would have surmised that any cloud rested on his mind. Agnes and the Major were both much pleased with him. The latter remarked, that he "was a sensible, well-mannered, manly young man, none of your low, sordid, counting-house fellows, whose whole souls are engrossed by pounds, shillings, and pence; none of your whippersnapper sentimental dandies, that look as if they were afraid to wet the soles of their feet, and good for nothing but to play with a lady's fan. None of your idle, billiard-playing, theatre-going scoundrels. A brave, honest fellow, that deserved to have fought for his king and his country." This was going as far as the Major could go; higher praise he had not to bestow than that a man deserved to be a soldier. Meanwhile his eulogium upon Malcolm had brought tears into the eyes of his younger daugh-

ter. Agnes remarked, in her quiet way, "Catherine's brother really does seem a nice, kind-hearted young man; I am glad to have seen something of him."

It seemed like old days to Caroline to be going with Malcolm to dine with the Rosses; and yet what a changed scene! Instead of the blue highland mountains, the pine woods, the birchen glades, the glassy tarns, the rushing river, the springy heather, the wild free air, and the whir of the moor-game, or the soft voice of the wood-pigeon, here were stone streets, hot pavements, crowded thoroughfares, dust and glare, the noise of carriages, and the hum of busy men. As they walked down Leith-walk (the hottest and dustiest walk in Britain), the sole beautiful object to be seen, and that was most beautiful, was the noble estuary widening out to the boundless sea; but as they got lower down the walk that too vanished, and ere long they found themselves amid all the smoke, and the dirt, and the dinginess which pre-eminently distinguishes Constitution-street, Leith. In a few minutes longer they were standing at the

door of a house in John's-place, on the Links,—a wide, open, uneven grassy space, to which is sometimes applied, on account of its exposed and stormy situation, the sobriquet of the Bay of Biscay. This is the pleasantest situation in Leith, and is not even without its historical associations. The houses on the further side of the Links from Edinburgh are only separated from the Firth by the sands and an intermediate row of storehouses, glass-works, &c., &c. At this moment, as our two young friends stood waiting for the door to be opened, the summer air was filled with the delightful fragrance admitted from a broken gas-pipe, while the blackest and densest cloud of smoke, proceeding from the above-mentioned works, brooded fondly over the scene. The last time Malcolm and Caroline had dined with the Rosses it had been at the old tower of Ardenнан. To those two young persons the whole world, within and without, seemed to have been changed since then; and to others too, besides themselves.

They found all the Rosses in the drawing-room; an apartment which seemed to

have been furnished with second-hand articles,—attempting to be smart and stylish, yet rather shabby, and not very comfortable. The only other guest expected to dinner was Captain Smythe, and he had not yet arrived.

Mrs. Ross looked much the same as in days of yore,—kind, homely, motherly; but as she shook hands with her guests, saying, in her old, simple way, “Well now, I take this very kind,” her voice trembled, and a tear rose to her dark eyes, and then trickled slowly down her fat, florid cheeks.

“How do you do, Miss Irvine? Mr. Gordon I am glad to see you,” was Mr. Ross’s salutation, in a frank, steady, unmoved tone; but it deceived neither Malcolm nor Caroline. More than ten years seemed to have been added to his life since they had seen him last. His figure was shrunken, his cheeks hollow, his eyes sunk, his hair much greyer. The result of all his laborious toils, the whole pride and triumph of his life,—that thing above all other things upon which his heart was set, had gone from him in a moment,

and he was left without one prop whereon his poor, worldly, yet strong, proud spirit might rest. He would not have uttered a complaint—he would not have shed a tear to have eased the severest pang he felt; but it was clear that his heart was broken. To see him thus was a melancholy sight, and Malcolm and Caroline equally felt all its profound sadness.

Maria was more composed, but quite as solemn and affected as when Caroline had last seen her at Ardennan. She was dressed in black—black net (a very becoming dress, though), ornamented with a yellow rose, intended as an emblem of blighted affection. Her hair was very smooth, and nicely dressed, and from the back of her head floated a long black veil. Poor Maria! she still looked pale and sad, and would have looked sadder had she not thought it necessary to roll her eyes and shake her head, and perform sundry other solemn duties, in order to convince the world that her existence was blighted. And it is wonderful how great was the consolation she found in her affectation, and in the notion of the

interestingness it conferred upon her in the eyes of others. Whether that she could find consolation in such things be a matter for pity or rejoicing, of laughter or tears, I confess myself incompetent to decide; and to you, therefore, reader, I leave it to determine according to the dictates of your judgment or your heart.

Poor Maria! she turned paler when she saw Malcolm, and without affectation trembled all over. He, too, was a little agitated, Caroline could perceive, but he speedily recovered.

William and Isabella Ross seemed less affected by their change of circumstances than the rest of the family. Their natures were, perhaps, too light and frivolous to be very deeply affected by anything. Frivolity of mind has frequently, in certain cases, an effect similar in appearance, but in appearance only, to philosophy, or to what is far higher, even—faithful and patient endurance. A very frivolous mind is incapable of forming a passionate attachment even to the vain things of the world. Where there is no depth or intensity of character, there

can seldom be anything either very bad or very good.

Isabella and her brother had not, like their father, built their whole happiness, or concentrated all their hopes, upon one great idol. Their happiness depended upon multitudes of smaller vanities; their hopes were frittered away on thousands of little daily objects. Wealth had afforded them the power to gratify many of their tastes and vanities,—but though that one source was cut off, others still remained; and, without any exertion whatever on their part, their minds, fitter from their quality to receive impressions than to retain them, were occupied and diverted by every passing circumstance. This capacity for *eluding* rather than enduring misfortune was increased too, in William, by the good opinion he entertained of himself. He had grown up in the belief that he was a very fascinating young man, and it only occasionally, and then very dimly, glanced across his mind, that his loss of wealth might possibly diminish his attractions. There was a slight consciousness in his

manner as he now addressed Caroline, a slight diminution of his former easy assurance and good-natured officiousness ; but it wore off in a few minutes, and William Ross was himself again, even to the extent of referring to the Countess Ida, — of whom he had lately, as he said, “ discovered some traces, having, in a newspaper sent by a talented friend in Paris, a young man connected with the press, (a much more distinguished position, you know, there than here,) seen her name mentioned in connection with the Court of Hesse-Kleinstadt. Ah, Miss Caroline ! it sent a thrill to my heart. It made me feel that, indeed, the ‘light of other days is faded.’ But, here comes Smythe.”

Violet’s brother, Captain George Smythe, was a young man about twenty-six or twenty-seven, below the middle height, slight and elegant in make, with small features, though by no means so good as those of his sister, and hands small and white as those of any lady, one of which was adorned with a ring composed of one large and remarkably fine brilliant.

He was in regimentals, in honour of the dance in the evening, and his whole dress and manner bespoke the "exquisite." He was the very beau-ideal of a holiday-soldier, polite, languid, and *ennuyé*. Yet George Smythe was a brave fellow at heart; and had a Waterloo or a Blenheim come in his way, could, I doubt not, have acquitted himself at the head of his company with all due gallantry. But fortune had destined him for other scenes. Saluting the family of his host with an easy languor, which was yet perfectly well-bred, he was then introduced to Malcolm and Caroline. He seemed to manifest a slight degree of interest in this last introduction, either because Caroline was his sister's friend, or because, in her pretty white dress, with her fresh blooming face and intelligent bright eyes, she really looked what Malcolm had once called her, a very "bonnie lassie."

Probably it was from both reasons combined, as our motives are generally mixed. He did not, however, take her down to dinner,—for being the only stranger lady

present, she fell to the share of their host himself, while he was allotted to the tragic Maria. Having exerted himself to make one or two lounging, ineffectual attempts to enter into conversation with that young lady,—who merely replied by absent glances fixed on air, deep sighs, and “I beg your pardons,” uttered in a sepulchral tone of voice,—he gave it up as a hopeless business, or at least as a business which required too much trouble for him to prosecute. After dinner, he did not return to the drawing-room till late,—till after most of the evening guests had arrived; and then he returned to Caroline. She inquired for Mrs. Cornish.

“Violet—ah!—I believe she is well; but I dare say you have heard from her since I have. I have not heard from her for months, though the fault is my own, I am bound to confess. I am a shocking correspondent, Miss Irvine. Letter writing is such a bore—so fatiguing. I am a desperately lazy fellow, Miss Irvine—dancing even, I occasionally find too much.”

And the gallant officer leant languidly back in his chair, contriving as he did so

to display to advantage his symmetrical white hand and sparkling diamond ring.

"And this silly fop is Violet's brother," thought Caroline. "How unlike herself—so free as she was, with all her faults, from every species of affectation." But Caroline was mistaken. George Smythe was not naturally silly. He had been spoilt by fortune and by idleness. Glimpses of this truth he occasionally had himself dim, fleeting notions that he would one of these days begin to lead a new life. But, like all indolent people, he was procrastinating, and if he thought of a time at all for beginning this change, it was always a time far off in the future,—a time which never drew nearer. And thus a young man of good abilities, and good fortune, and without any vicious propensities, was content to dream away his whole existence in utter uselessness. Better, a thousand times better, it had been for him, had he had his way to cut through dangers and difficulties. George Smythe would have been quite capable of doing that, as he possessed, in truth, both

spirit and perseverance, but it required the spur of opposition to rouse them into action. He had been ruined by good fortune. Caroline now inquired if he had seen his sister since her marriage.

“Yes; I paid Cornish and herself a visit as soon as they were settled at Harbury; but I could make nothing of either of them, they were so deucedly taken up with one another—quite in the turtle-dove line. I am sure I wonder how people can take so much trouble.”

Caroline could not help smiling at this speech,—which however gave her sincere pleasure. Captain Smythe caught the glance of her merry eye, and smiled too,—a genuine smile.

“I told you,” he said, “that I was dreadfully lazy; and upon my soul it seems to me that when people fall in love they take an immense deal of unnecessary trouble. Why it would kill me to live in the kind of fuss Violet and Arthur live in.”

“You don’t intend to marry, then, I suppose?”

"Marry! oh, no!—at least, not for a long time, unless I should happen to fall in love, which Heaven forbid!"

"It would do you a great deal of good, I think," said Caroline, quite gravely, in her simple, wise way.

As she spoke the young officer sat upright, his countenance assumed a livelier expression, and he answered, in a tone which had completely lost its languid drawl, "'Pon honour, I believe you are right. I should be a much more useful member of society, happier man, and all that kind of thing, if I could only be troubled; and perhaps, *perhaps* I may one of these days, a few years hence; who knows? I *can* make an exertion now and then, and—now don't laugh at me so wickedly, Miss Irvine; and to show you that I really can, I will dance that reel, if you will do me the honour to dance it with me. Do, if you please? I promise you I really will dance it."

Only partly believing him, and rather curious to see how he would acquit himself, besides being much inclined for the reel herself, she agreed at once, and they

joined the set just forming. Somewhat to her surprise, Captain Smythe acquitted himself to admiration; for not only was he a beautiful dancer, but he displayed all the agility and spirit so necessary to the right performance of our national dance. Caroline and he were the last couple to sit down. She complimented him upon his activity.

“I told you I *could* exert myself when I had a motive;” and then, as if to prove to her still more clearly the truth of this assertion, he actually entered into a lively conversation. Besides several of the principal towns in England, his regiment, since he joined it, had been quartered in various parts of Ireland; and he gave her an amusing and lively account of the society in some of those places. There was a dash of satire in his tone, with occasionally an expression of liveliness which was not mirth, which reminded her of Violet. But he seemed more open, and frank, and was much more egotistical than his sister. At last he said, “I suppose I must now dance with one of the Miss Rosses. I shall try the younger one; I

was so overawed at dinner by that black-veiled Melpomene, that my stunned faculties are only now beginning to revive."

"A few minutes afterwards he was whirling round the room with Isabella Ross. As he passed Caroline, he looked at her with a serio-comic expression, which seemed to say, "See how frightfully I am exerting myself."

Caroline now placed herself beside Maria Ross, who was seated in an attitude upon a sofa. She inquired if the latter had been dancing.

"Dancing! No; — the time when I could take an interest in that frivolous amusement is past for ever! I feel as I look around me, Caroline, on the fluttering, thoughtless crowd, that my existence is spent in lonely sorrow, in burning memory. Mr. Gordon, I see, can still dance. I envy him; but I am different. An impression made on me is made for ever."

"Malcolm, I believe, considered it his duty not to allow his feelings to get the better of him. He has made great exertions."

“Exertions would be unavailing to me ; but my feelings are of a peculiar nature—my feelings are not those of common persons. I am one who has been made to drink deep of the bitter cup of ingratitude. Fine feelings do not add to our happiness in this sublunary sphere ; yet I should rather have had my intense joys and the deep sorrows of my own romantic life, than the cold, passionless destiny of a less finely-constituted being.” And as Maria spoke she looked at Malcolm. Caroline felt indignant when she thought of Malcolm’s bitter, silent, uncomplaining sorrow, of his endurance so strong and firm, yet so modest and delicate, contrasted with Maria’s vain parade. And yet Maria believed what she said. She had no conception of feelings different from her own. She could not conceive of a sorrow far too deep for expression, nor of a virtue above *fine feelings*. She measured all things by their appearances, or rather she interpreted appearances according to the fashion of her own mind. She had no conception of the silence which is more eloquent than speech. Maria then began

to speak of their change of circumstances,—

“I care not for the dross of the earth,” she said; “still to be reduced from affluence to poverty, and to be deprived of so many luxuries to which I have been accustomed is a minor trial; yet nothing to what I have gone through, for I am one who has suffered deeply. To me minor sufferings appear as nothing,—the adulation of the world less than nothing; for I know the world, and have discovered all its hollowness. I ask nothing but to be left to wear out my blighted existence in all the peace there is left me, ‘the world forgetting, by the world forgot!’”

Here Maria stopped; and then, according to her wont, fell into a fit of sublime abstraction, with her eyes bent upon the earth. After waiting for a minute or two, Caroline addressed to her some commonplace remark, but she returned no answer; and the former was on the point of quitting her seat, when Maria arousing herself with a deep sigh, and turning up the whites of her eyes, asked, in a tone solemn enough to have befitted an inquisitor,—

"How do you occupy yourself in Edinburgh, Caroline?"

"I thought you had known that I have an engagement as day-governess."

"Day-governess! Ah! I dare say I did hear Isabella say something about it; but my mind is so much occupied, so absorbed by its own griefs and reflections, that I have but little power to listen to the conversation I hear around me. A governess, did you say? What a laborious, uninteresting life!"

"Laborious, but not uninteresting."

"And then," continued Maria, who had a habit of not attending to what persons said, "governesses have so much to bear—the scorn of the world—the humors and whims, and ill-treatment of their haughty, unfeeling employers. *I* could never be a governess. It would not suit my independent, uncringing spirit; but others are not like me. Still, Caroline, I pity you."

And Maria gave the long black veil a graceful tragic sweep. Caroline hardly knew whether to be amused or indignant.

She answered with spirit, and with a smile in her eyes if not on her lips,—

“Thank you for your pity, Maria, but it is wasted on me. I do not require it. My employer is very kind to me. The world does not scorn me that I know of; and if any individuals do because I am a governess they are perfectly welcome. The scorn or the admiration of such people is equally a matter of indifference to me. I have youth, and health, and peace of mind, and I am all the happier that I can earn my own bread. I do not want pity from any one.”

But Maria had again fallen into a reverie; the waltz was now over, and Malcolm came to invite Caroline to join a quadrille. He spoke on indifferent subjects; but it seemed as if it were with an effort. Caroline could perceive that he was out of spirits, although he had been dancing all the evening, and talking with apparent gaiety to all his partners. She felt a sort of melancholy satisfaction in the idea that he did not think it necessary with her to pretend a gaiety he did not feel. After the dance was over, they followed one or

two other couples who were taking an airing in the passage, the night being very warm for dancing.

“Carry,” said Malcolm, as they walked up and down, “don’t you find me a very entertaining companion?—brilliant coruscations of wit, profound remarks on men and things, &c. &c. Such are the terms, no doubt, in which I shall figure in to-night’s diary, written to-morrow morning, as you will be too sleepy to-night after you get home.”

Caroline smiled in answer,—but there was a sort of sadness in her smile, as there had been in Malcolm’s words, despite their jesting tone. He continued, more seriously,—

“I ought to apologise to you, Caroline, for imposing upon you a partner so silent and ungallant, when you might have been dancing with some one more to your taste; but the truth is, I have been hard at work all night trying to be agreeable, while my thoughts were elsewhere, and by way of indulging in a little selfish repose, I thought I might trespass on my young sister’s unfailing good-nature.”

"And I am sure, Malcolm," cried Caroline warmly, with that ready sympathy and artless frankness which made so conspicuous a part of her character, "I am sure I shall be happy to dance with you again, when you are in the least weary."

He returned no answer immediately; and Caroline continued, colouring uncomfortably,—

"I dare say, Malcolm, you think me a very forward girl to offer to dance with a gentleman?"

Malcolm smiled more genially than she had yet seen him do during the evening, as he replied,—

"Let me see—a lady offers to dance with a gentleman. It is not a conventional proceeding, I believe. Etiquette-books would pronounce it wrong. But then there are other codes of propriety besides those to be found in manuals of etiquette. There is that taught, as for instance, by our hearts,—and, consulting mine in the present instance, my dear friend Carry, I find you not only right but generous, and with very unfeigned gratitude I thank

you. Conventionalisms, which are the laws of polite society, are highly necessary as a terror to evil-doers,—though, as we can have nothing perfect in this world, they are frequently attended with the great disadvantage of acting as a restraint upon honest and natural feelings. If all the world possessed as much innate propriety as you Caroline, we might rid ourselves of conventionalisms at once! Till the millenium I fear, however, they will be a necessary evil; but not between friends, such friends as we are, my dear little sister.”

While they had been speaking, Caroline had dropped her pocket-handkerchief. It was now brought to her by Captain Smythe, and presented with a gallant bow. He then inquired if she were engaged for the next dance. Caroline hesitated for a minute; but as Malcolm did not claim her, said,—

“No, she was not engaged.” Captain Smythe then led her off into the dancing-room. She was a little mortified that Malcolm should not have said she was engaged to him; while he had modestly imagined that she would prefer dancing

with the young officer, so very far was he from guessing her real feelings. They had hardly left him, when he was joined by William Ross.

“ Shall I get you a partner, Gordon ? Smythe I see has carried off Miss Irvine. Smythe seems quite smitten in that quarter. He thinks her the prettiest girl in the room—the prettiest girl he has seen since he came to Scotland. Smythe is a capital fellow, a very intimate friend of mine,—lots of money too. Miss Irvine might do worse.”

Malcolm started. He had never thought of the possibility of Caroline’s marrying, except as an event remote in some distant future, and for a second the notion gave him an unaccountable sensation of dissatisfaction.

“ She is too young,” he said to himself,—as if to account for this sensation ; “ far too young to enter upon the grand duties of life—too young even to know who would suit her ; and there are few indeed to whom I should like to intrust the happiness of a girl such as Caroline. Pshaw ! what is it, after all, but the

vague surmise of a weak young man, founded on the passing admiration of an officer in barracks."

And Malcolm felt inclined to smile at his own alarm. Nevertheless he re-entered the room, and watched the couple with some interest. He could discern nothing in the young man's manner to indicate that he felt more pleasure in Caroline's company, than an agreeable flirtation might be supposed to bestow, while her demeanour was even more unconcerned.

In the course of ten minutes, Malcolm had forgotten the whole affair.

CHAPTER XI.

CAROLINE, according to Mrs. Hunter's request, invited Isabella Ross to her patroness's next party. The latter came along with her brother, who had also been invited through the medium of Captain Smythe. She was not quite so stylishly dressed as in former days, but as stiff and constrained, as determined to be excessively refined and distinguished in manner, as she always was before she became familiar. She had been much pleased by the invitation, and was very solicitous to make a good impression that the introduction might be followed up by an intimacy,—for Isabella felt that to be intimate with Mrs. Hunter would establish her gentility at once. "Willie" too was determined to be

fascinating,—and accordingly he appeared in embroidered shirt-front, with fashionable neck-tie, and the most unexceptionable of glossy boots; while his manner was at once profoundly deferential, and devotedly gallant. Mrs. Hunter received her new guests with her very sweetest smile, and welcomed them with her blandest drawl.

“So glad to see you, my dear Caroline’s friends. I regard Caroline almost as a sister. Pray my dear Miss Ross, do be seated. Mr. Ross, I beg,”—and Mrs. Hunter concluded with a languishing smile, of the sweetness of which all similes are powerless to convey an idea. But Mr. William Ross could not be seated, could not *think* or *dream* of being seated, till he saw his fair hostess in a chair.

“Might he have the great happiness of fetching her one.”

Another ineffable simper was the “sweet woman’s” reply. The chair was brought; and the fascinating young man placed himself beside her with the same air of exclusive devotion which Caroline had

first seen him assume towards Jane Purves, and with which he had once or twice honoured herself. From where she was seated, she could hear that he was entertaining his hostess with "Germany—distinguished friends of ours—charming society—the Countess Ida von Carlberg—mind—art—friend of mine—distinguished artist—Alphonse de Vervier—most intellectual circles of Paris—idol of all who knew him—genius nipt in the bud—loss to the world—to his friends, a grief for ever."

Then, "Wonder you do not go abroad, Mrs. Hunter — society that would suit *you* — so intellectual and refined. In Paris you would be the rage, so free from our island stiffness and *gaucherie*. You would be quite persecuted by artists, who would be dying to get you for a model. And yet, I trust, you will not go, as our northern capital could ill afford to lose one of its brightest ornaments." To all this Mrs. Hunter replied by a series of sweet simpers, languishing looks, "Oh's, ah's! and really you don't means."

The following day, Miss Isabella Ross,

who had had but little conversation with her hostess at the party, called in Shandwick-place, where Mrs. Hunter resided. The two ladies, in a *tête-à-tête*, discovered at once that they were congenial souls, and struck up on the spot an "eternal friendship." In fact, they exactly suited each other; for to retail and to hear news was the ruling passion of both, while Isabella listened with all due admiration to the elder lady's details of compliments, admirers, dresses; and never presumed to attempt to establish in anything a rival claim. Without being that meanest of all created things,—a regular, grovelling toady, Isabella was, by her ready submission on all occasions to take the second part, admirably cut out for a humble friend.

Mrs. Hunter, in her new mania for patronizing, declared to all her friends that she "had taken *such* a fancy to dear Isabella Ross, really she did not know when she had taken such a fancy—such a pleasant, ladylike girl. Dear Caroline Irvine was cleverer, certainly; and much as she liked and *loved* her, she

even preferred dear Isabella. There was something about her, she could not tell what, but she did *not* know when she had taken such a fancy. And her brother was a charming young man, so highly intellectual, had evidently mixed in the best society, and had such agreeable manners. They could not help their misfortunes, and it was one's duty, really one's duty, to bring into notice real merit. She always made a point of doing it. There was dear Caroline Irvine—it was a pleasure to her to think what she had done for that girl. She hoped all her friends would invite the Rosses. There was an elder sister too, whom she had not seen—a most superior, intellectual creature, who had met with some great disappointment, the outs and ins of which she was to get from dear Isabella some day. She had been engaged, she believed, to some young man of high family and distinguished attractions—a most romantic affair, but of course true love never runs smooth. But she would be at the bottom of it. Dear Isabella, she was sure, would keep

nothing from her, and then, she added, "you may depend on my letting you know; but in confidence you understand, for I hate to spread gossip, and it must not come from me upon any account. I would not for the world tell any one but yourself."

This same speech Mrs. Hunter made to half-a-dozen persons at least in the course of one day. She had tried to sound Caroline on the subject, but had found her impenetrable, on which account she concluded that the latter knew nothing about the mystery. Caroline was one of the number to whom she voluntarily made the promise chronicled above.

But let us now pass on to the autumn. It is August. Edinburgh—the *fashionable* part of Edinburgh — is literally empty; the streets unfrequented, grass even growing in some of them; the window-shutters mostly shut; and a general air of dust, glare, and dulness pervades everything. The foliage in the gardens is shrivelled and smoke-dried, and the aspect of all objects seems weary and exhausted. It is some months since

thoroughly disengaged persons left the town. Even lawyers, detained in town by the sitting of the courts, and parents with children at school, unwilling to leave before the holidays, are all now gone either to their country residences, the Bridge of Allan, Moffat, Rothsay, Dunoon, or some other among the many sea-bathing and watering-places in Scotland, most of which are situated amidst beautiful and romantic scenery. Mrs. Hunter even had withdrawn to Shairpridge for a month or two. She had invited Caroline to accompany her ; but the latter had declined, for hot and dull though Edinburgh was, she preferred greatly being there with her father and sister to being at Shairpridge with Mrs. Hunter. The latter then invited instead Isabella Ross, exacting a promise from Willie, who, on his part, was nothing loath, to take a run down for a week or two to see his sister and herself any time before the end of October. George Smythe was also to pay her a visit.

All Caroline's intimates being out of town, and her occupation of teaching at

a stand for the present, she had what now seemed to her not only affluence, but perfect wealth of leisure. Once she had always had as much. How little she had prized it then, and how much now ! A great deal of her time she devoted to painting, in which she had already made much progress, while, attended by the Major and sometimes by Agnes, she took rambles among the hills, and over the surrounding country. Occasionally, too, they made little excursions either by water or by railway, visiting many of the historical and romantic spots which lie within an easy journey of the Scotch metropolis. Thus tranquilly and pleasantly Caroline spent her holidays.

If sometimes, in the sultry afternoons, as the sinking sun streamed hotly through the half-closed window-shutters, and she thought, how sweetly now the lawn at Wallacefield would be flecked with bars of gold and darksome green, and how freshly and swiftly the cool river would be rolling by ; or how the gold rays were now crowning with glory the purple summit of Ben Achquaigh, or the tops of the

dark pines by Locharroch, she did heave a sigh or drop a tear to the memory of other days and scenes, she indulged in no vain or sentimental regrets, but worked bravely and hopefully on, animating herself ever with Malcolm's example.

About the close of the above-mentioned month, Caroline received a letter from Malcolm, in which he informed her that he had taken his passage in one of the "*Overland vessels*," and was to sail from England about the middle of the ensuing month. "He must," he said, "be in London at least a week previous to his quitting the country, and would on his way thither spend two days with his sister Caroline and her family. Longer time Catherine would not spare him from herself."

Two days, then!—two short days were all she was to have of Malcolm's society, perhaps for ever; for was he not going far away and for many years?—and who could tell what might happen before he came back, or where they might all be? If, indeed, he ever came back at all.—Two days!

Malcolm came, trying to be cheerful; but Carry saw, like herself, sad at heart. How swiftly the two days passed! Before Malcolm's arrival, Caroline remembered many things she wished to say to him; but as soon as he came she forgot them all, though incessantly tormented by the consciousness that she had forgotten them. Those two days were to Caroline full of a species of happiness bordering on misery. At last they were over, and the morning of separation had actually arrived. Malcolm was to depart by an early train; and by the peep of dawn, the little household in Ann-street, with the exception of the Major, who had bidden his guest farewell the preceding night, were all astir. Agnes felt sorry; but her feelings, except when the very nearest and dearest were concerned, though true and kind, were not of an excitable description. She was, therefore, quite able to make her very best tea—for Agnes was famous for her tea—and to contrive various little arrangements in the most self-possessed manner, all having some reference to the physical comfort of her parting guest. But Caro-

line could not have made tea that morning, or have done a single thing in a rational manner. Her mind was occupied with one fixed idea. Malcolm was going—in a few minutes he would be gone. It was all, all over—all their pleasant conversations—all their mutual confidence—all their affectionate friendship—all the deep, though hidden delight she had experienced in his society. That frank, open, merry glance, so full of kindness, was to rest on her no more,—no more was she to hear the tones of that cordial, cheerful voice,—no more to feel the support of that liberal and intelligent mind, that tender and manly heart. It was all over. The morning dream of life, the sweet romance of youth was vanishing away. Poor Caroline's heart was full to bursting. Her eyes swam; all objects seemed to float around her, to flit by her like unreal shadows. Malcolm she durst hardly look at; but when she did, he, too, seemed unreal and shadowy. It seemed as if even now he were being removed into the distance, as if already she had a foretaste of the feelings she should experience when

kingdoms and continents, and great wide seas, should separate her from him whom her heart loved.

Poor Caroline ! she sat with a tea-cup full of tea before her, but she did not even attempt to taste it. She felt that a single mouthful would have choked her. She tried, but in vain, to maintain a tolerable cheerfulness ; it would not do, and the large drops gathered in her eyes and rolled down her face.

And Malcom saw it, and all the firmness he had summoned up for the occasion began to give way. His feelings were not like Caroline's, yet, perhaps, they were of even a sadder complexion. Home, friends, country, family affection,—he was quitting them all ; not even as he had quitted them ten years ago, for then the world was all untried,—a field of unknown adventure seemed to lie before him, and exile and solitude had not yet taught him the value of all he left behind. And now, though he guessed not the source whence these tears flowed, he knew they flowed for him, and he was inexpressibly touched. All the kindness and sympathy

of the young, artless Caroline suddenly came before him; and in that moment in which he was to be deprived of them, he felt that he had never been sufficiently grateful for them. Our hearts are never so soft as at the parting moment, and his was now full of tenderness, yet not of love, for the dear girl who now sat weeping near him. He rose, and sitting down close beside her, took her hand, which was cold with agitation, between both of his.

“I cannot eat,” he said in a husky voice; “it is quite in vain; and I have come to sit beside my dear young sister, during the last ten minutes I shall spend in—”

Here his voice became quite inaudible. He began again more cheerfully :

“You must write me long letters, Caroline, and tell me everything, even the minutest particular, for all will be interesting to me. Catherine writes very punctually, but never in detail. Tell me about your painting, and what books you are reading, and what you are thinking of and wishing; if you are still aspiring

after a voyage to the south pole, or have moderated your wishes to a trip to Switzerland or Wales, by way of collecting subjects for your pencil."

As Malcolm spoke, he laughed at her in the old way, but his eyes were full of tears.

Trying to assume the same lively tone, yet hardly knowing what she was doing, she answered in a similar strain, though she trembled all over, and her face was flushed with nervous excitement.

Malcolm continued to talk on indifferent topics, for he felt that no other could be safely indulged in. Yet he pressed Caroline's hand ever closer in his. It seemed his last hold upon home. The minutes were fleeting fast,—those precious, sorrowful minutes. And now it was only moments. At last he rose abruptly, saying, in a quick, firm tone, "Now I must go, Miss Irvine; good bye. Many thanks for all your kindness. Remember me to the Major. Caroline, farewell."

He had shaken hands with Agnes, and he now turned to Caroline. She held out both her hands. He clasped them

warmly, yet held them but a second, while he kissed her on the forehead. Then turning away his head, and without another glance, he hastily quitted the room.

Almost ere Caroline had time to know that he was gone, she heard the house-door close upon him. Agnes ran to the window to see him get into the cab, but Caroline could not accompany her; besides, she was blind with tears. She threw herself upon a sofa, and hiding her face on a cushion, wept as she had never wept since childhood.

Agnes was still, in pensive mood, looking out of the window, when she was startled by her sister's sobs, which the latter was unable to repress. Agnes hastened to her in surprise, for she had not the remotest idea of the poor girl's feelings. "My dear child, my dearest Carry, what is the matter with you? You should not give way so, my dear. I cannot understand it; you who bore up so well when we left home. Mr. Malcolm is a nice, kind person,—still, he

is not really your brother. What would you have done if it had been John?"

Even amidst all her distress, Caroline felt a transient gleam of amusement at the simplicity of her unsuspecting sister. But she still wept on, for in truth she could not help it.

"My love, it is not right to give way so. Oh, Carry! you have been taking too much fatigue, and walking too much about for the last few days. I was afraid of it all the time; and you have been so restless in bed at night; but I said nothing, for you are so positive in these things."

"Oh, Agnes!" cried Caroline, speaking now for the first time, "I have such a headache, and my temples throb so."

"You had better go to bed, my dear, and we shall bathe them with vinegar and water. I am certain you need rest."

"Yes, rest and quiet, Agnes, dear; I should like to be left alone; but tell papa I am not ill, only worn out."

Caroline was glad to be in bed, glad to be alone, that she might weep un-

molested. Her head, indeed, ached violently, and her poor little heart beat wildly. She sat up, and stretching out her arms, cried aloud, "Oh Malcolm!" But he was gone,—gone from her longing eyes—gone from her aching heart. Gone, and with all his tenderness he loved her not, never would love her. So she felt in this moment of despondency—the saddest moment, she thought, of all her life.

Meanwhile, Malcolm was journeying on, ever farther and farther from his dear mountain land. The visit home, to which he had looked with fondest hopes through years of exile, was now, with its heartfelt pleasures and its bitter disappointments, but a part of the past. He was again the possessor of his father's house; that ardent wish was fulfilled; but the fulfilment had not brought the joy he had expected. With all his success he felt at that moment that life was ever a disappointment. He thought of Catherine and Locharroch, once more but a vision of the past. He thought of the kind young face, the last loved and

loving face he had seen ; but it, too, was flitting into the visionary land. "Dear Caroline !" he said to himself, "when I come back, if I ever do, she will be much changed. Perhaps I shall find her then as I found Catherine this time, a wife and a mother. May God bless them all, amid all changes, for evermore !"

CHAPTER XII.

SIX years had sped away since the events recorded in the preceding chapters. It was nearly six years since that day on which young Caroline Irvine, in girlish fashion, had mourned the departure of him who had, unsought and unknown, won the first love of her fresh, ardent heart. Nearly six years had passed since that day on which Malcolm Gordon had turned his back upon his native Scotland, and with a sad, yet courageous heart, bade God bless all the dear ones he had left behind. Six years seem a long time; yet, reader, if you will look back on the last six years of your own life, unless you be very young indeed, it will also seem a short one. Frequently the seeming dura-

tion of a period depends upon the aspect in which we view it; and often the time which seems most tedious while it is passing, appears the shortest after it is past. Thus, during weeks or months of sickness, spent in the unvaried monotony of place and occupation, time seems to move on leaden pinions; but, after the weeks and months have actually passed, from the same reason—because there has been nothing to mark the time—they seem an utter blank. In looking forward, these six years had appeared to both Malcolm and Caroline—but more especially to the latter, who was ten years younger than the former—an almost interminable period. Yet now they were passed; and so swiftly had they flown, amidst constant occupation on both sides, that it seemed hardly possible to believe that so large a portion of life was actually gone. But though during that period no very important events or sudden changes had occurred to mark the time,—though that parting day appeared yet so fresh and recent, there was an aspect in which the time did not appear short. When the spiritual pilgrims looked back upon the way

their minds had come, they *felt* that they were older; and thus they could believe without difficulty, strange though it otherwise seemed, that six years had been added to their lives. One can tell where the great time-river has rolled from the alluvium it has deposited.

It was one afternoon towards the close of the cool season in India. Malcolm Gordon was sitting alone in an apartment of his house, in one of the suburbs of Calcutta. It was, according to our European notions, a very spacious, lofty, and airy apartment,—too airy, lofty, and empty to suit our northern ideas of comfort. Along one side was a row of large windows, the Venetian shutters of which, now open, displayed a verandah, and beyond, a compound or garden. The walls of this apartment were pale in colour, and quite bare; the roof unceiled, and, depending from the middle, a punkah, or great fan, now, however, at rest. A matting on the floor, a table in the middle of the room, spread over with books, papers, and writing materials, one or two other tables, and a few chairs, completed the appointments of the

apartment, of which the sole luxuries seemed space and air. Malcolm was seated at the table in the middle of the room; he was dressed in a loose jacket of white cotton. He was thinner, his complexion darker, and the lines on his features more marked than they were six years ago. He looked older, undoubtedly; yet he seemed healthy; for his blue eye was clear as ever, and, though his expression might be a little graver than when we first saw him at Locharroch, its gravity was the gravity of thought, not of suffering. He looked less sad, too, than he sometimes did in his silent moments when we last beheld him. No, it could be neither sorrow nor sickness, even although there was a drop on his eyelash, that made him look so grave at present. But although, as I have said, the table was strewn with books and writing materials, Malcolm was neither reading nor writing. He seemed engaged in the contemplation of some object which lay upon the table, and that object was a picture—a drawing in water-colours. Yes, there it was, in miniature, but so like—so very like, that the artist

seemed to have stolen the spirit of the waters and the mountains, and breathed them into the mimic landscape. It was hot, sultry India. Around were the white houses, the flat roofs, the flat esplanade, the great, muddy Hooghly, strange eastern trees, strange, dark, turbaned figures; but as he gazed at the picture, the present, with all its accompaniments, seemed to vanish, and he seemed to feel the cool breeze of the highland mountains, to tread the springy heather, to see the pine woods, the birch copses, the broomy braes,—to see the well-known forms, and hear the dear familiar tones of home. And this it was which had made him look so serious,—thoughts of the days which were gone—thoughts of the days which yet might be. In one year more, perhaps, he might see the real Loch Achquaigh. And then he bent down to look again at the picture. Yes, it was Loch Achquaigh—Loch Achquaigh as he had often seen it, with the mist-wreaths, and the sun-gleams and all the lights and shadows of a morning in early autumn,—a real, living picture, with the soul of nature in it,—no mere lifeless copy

of outlines and colours. Faults it had, unquestionably, but it was clearly the work of one whose spirit was in harmony with nature, and to whom it had been given to penetrate and reveal her mystery and beauty. All this Malcolm felt as he gazed at the picture, and as he gazed the picture itself seemed to vanish away, even while his eyes were fixed upon it, and there rose up in its place before his mental vision another picture—the picture of a kind young face, full of bloom and freshness as the wild rose of his native land. He felt that in all Scotland there was nothing he should like better to see than that blithe affectionate face, and, half aloud, he breathed the words—“Dear Caroline!”

From the picture he turned to a letter, which was lying open on the table. It was, apparently, a very long letter, consisting of a large sheet of thin, bluish paper, such as is used for Indian correspondence, and was closely written and crossed all over. The hand-writing, however, was so clear and regular, that it was perfectly legible. Malcolm began to read this letter over again, and, as he read,

he made, in a sort of dreamy, Indian way, some reflections on the lapse of time not unlike those with which I have commenced my chapter, though his were even more vague than mine. The sequel of his meditations might thus be translated into language:—"Time must have changed her; for she was then little more than a child, and she is now evidently a woman, and a woman of no common powers. But though changed, still the same,—the same warm heart, the same lively intelligence, the same candour and singleness of mind, the same unselfish activity in kindness. Not changed, then—only developed, or changed as the bud changes into the flower. I wonder how she will look; not old, I should think. She has too healthy a mind—writes always in too happy a manner, to look old. And, in cold climates, people look so much younger than in this scorching, withering atmosphere." And then Malcolm began to wonder if he looked very old. He feared he must: for he was nearly thirty-five, and had spent sixteen years of his life in Calcutta,—seventeen he should have spent ere he

could leave it. He sighed, and leant meditatively back in his chair for a few minutes. He was now recalling the various incidents in his visit to Europe—that period which, above all others, stood out clearly from the neutral tint of his existence since he, a raw youth, had left sports and dreams behind, and entered upon the arena of busy life. He thought of Violet Smythe, now Lady Cornish,—of the passionate, absorbing love he had once felt for her,—of the heavy disappointment which had overclouded the latter part of that visit which had begun so happily,—of the long, hard struggle which had succeeded—so very hard at first, but becoming ever easier and easier, till, by imperceptible degrees, it was no struggle at all; though even then—even yet, it had left, as all events and feelings do on him who is not a fool, its impress on his character. Still he had not thought once of Violet Smythe for some months, and he wondered now at the feelings he had once had towards her. “With all her fascinations,” he thought, “and they were many, she would never have suited me. We were

not like each other,—we had no feelings, opinions, or tastes in common. I could not have made her happy. The life that I should have liked to have led would have been wearisome to her, and I must either have spent mine amid scenes for which I have no taste, or borne to see her languish and become listless and *ennuyée*, or, perhaps, striving with pain to perform what she might have considered her duty to me. And then, perhaps, on my side, as it must have been on hers from the first, it would have become a struggle to preserve affection, and we should both have repented when it was too late. The only chance for our happiness would have been in her loving me as I loved her; but, as it was, our happiness was impossible. How clearly I see it all now—all the folly of my wishes and my repinings—all the love and the wisdom of Him who ordered the event! What an infatuation—what an incomprehensible madness, it all seems now! How could I have thought and felt as I did then? Old as I am, I should still like to marry, and I could still, I believe, love very sincerely—but

not as I did then. I have got over the fever of love's sweet madness, and it can return no more."

Arrived at this point in his ruminations, Malcolm suddenly started from the reclining attitude into which he had thrown himself, and, snatching up a pen, began to write vigorously, ever and anon in the course of his labours casting a glance at the picture, or taking up the letter which he appeared to be answering. And, to judge from what was already written, and from the rate at which he was still proceeding, the answer promised to be yet longer than the letter.

Malcolm was writing, as the reader has already guessed, to Caroline Irvine. They had been constant correspondents, hardly ever having missed a mail since they were separated. And their correspondence, instead of (as frequently happens when the separation of the parties is long, and the scenes by which they are surrounded utterly different) dwindling into short epistles, filled with mere conventional inquiry and information, waxed ever more voluminous and more friendly, till, at last,

they might have been said rather to write journals than letters for one another. Caroline found that there was no circumstance of their every-day life too minute to be interesting to Malcolm. "I like even to know where you are all sitting, and what you are all about," he once wrote, "and then I can make a picture of you all in my mind, and almost persuade myself sometimes that I have actually been with you." By degrees, Malcolm fell into a habit of imparting to Caroline all his hopes, expectations, and prospects, as from her he invariably met with the readiest sympathy. He also wrote to her accounts of the persons, things, and books with which he became acquainted; and across the lands and seas which divided them they kept up as constant an interchange of sentiments and views as if they had lived in the same street.

And thus Malcolm was enabled to trace, and even partly to influence the development of the young girl's mind. Highly as he had regarded,—much as he had liked her during the period of their personal intercourse, he entertained a still higher

opinion of her now, and was more deeply interested in her than ever. Her correspondence had become his greatest luxury, —almost a necessary of life to him. But we must now return to Caroline, that we may see how the six years have passed with her.

Major Irvine and his daughters were still residing in Ann-street, in the same house into which they had removed on leaving Wallacefield. The six years had made no greater changes on them than six years always must. The Major was still a hale old man, though now he stooped a little, his step was slower and less firm, his forehead balder, and the thin hair which swept back from it white as the snows of the Himmalaya. Agnes was still thin, pale, and mild, and still wore the same pale-coloured dresses. The crow's foot had perhaps made a little progress, and one or two of her front teeth had begun to decay; otherwise she was little changed; the same quiet affectionate, industrious, simple-minded being as ever. Both she and her father were, however, if possible,

fonder and prouder than ever of their darling Caroline. Caroline was in appearance the most changed, but the change in her was an improvement. Her girlish, hardly-developed figure was now filled and rounded into womanly proportions. Her neck and arms were fairer and plumper; her movements were characterized by a more womanly dignity; her brown eyes shone with a deeper thoughtfulness, and the happiness expressed by her still joyous face was altogether of a more chastened description. Her cheek was still tinged by the same fresh roseate hue, deepened perhaps a little in shade, and the same soft curls of gold-brown hair still fell in rich luxuriance upon her neck. Caroline Irvine at twenty-four was unquestionably a very pretty young woman, and in society met with considerable admiration upon that score. Nevertheless, I must confess it, derogatory as it may seem to her dignity, during all these six years of her womanhood she had not had one offer of marriage. She was not, however, distressed on that account; on the contrary, she felt rather

glad, as it would have been very painful for her to have been obliged to refuse any one; and at twenty-four to Caroline Irvine it seemed, as it had done at eighteen, a matter of impossibility that she should marry any man she was likely to win. Time had not lessened the high opinion she had entertained of Malcolm Gordon; but, on the contrary, had increased and confirmed it. Their constant and copious correspondence had heightened her admiration both for his abilities and his goodness, while it prevented the impression he had made upon her from being worn out by time and absence. Impressions made on minds such as Caroline's—minds imbued with strong feelings and lively powers of realizing the invisible and the absent,—are not easily effaced; but had she had no intercourse during the interval with Malcolm, the woman of twenty-four might possibly and naturally have doubted the correctness of the impression made on the girl of eighteen. But it had been ordered otherwise. Caroline knew more thoroughly now than she had done then the mind of Malcolm Gordon, and

the growth of her own powers, and her more extended intercourse with society, had rendered her still more able to appreciate it. She felt that she had never known any one to be compared with him—none at least who suited her so well, and whom, while she admired, she could so thoroughly sympathise with. Though her feelings were not what they had been six years ago, the instincts of her girlish heart had been right. Although she believed herself cured of the love which had made her weep so bitterly, and feel so forsaken and so wretched on the day of Malcolm's departure, and so cold and heavy at heart for many a long day after, although she was now resigned, nay, content they should remain the "affectionate brother" and "affectionate sister" they always styled themselves in their letters, still she felt that having known Malcolm Gordon, she could never love any one else.

One day, about two months after that on which we had a glimpse of Malcolm in his Indian home, Caroline received a letter by the Overland Mail. Immediately she

hastened away to her own room to read it, for she was in the habit of reading all Malcolm's letters alone there, ere she brought them down-stairs to edify her father and sister. And this, too, was a more than usually interesting letter,—as it would probably contain an acknowledgment of the receipt of the picture,—the first picture Caroline had exhibited, and for which she had refused a considerable sum, that she might give it to Malcolm Gordon. As she tore open the letter, her fingers trembled a little, and her heart beat rather more quickly than usual,—partly from the natural anxiety of the artist for the credit of her work, — partly with the mere woman's hope that her gift had been appreciated. At that moment she felt that, after all, Malcolm's opinion of the view of Loch Achquaigh was of more consequence to her than that of all the connoisseurs and academies in the world.—What would he say?

His praises and his thanks exceeded her most sanguine expectations. It was the most cordial, the most affectionate letter she had ever received from him. He con-

gratulated her warmly on her success as an artist, and thanked her in the most grateful terms for her present. He was no judge of painting, he said, but he was sure the picture must be good, as the sight of it had brought tears to his eyes,—and filled him with a painful longing to see once again the reality of the scene it represented,—to see his home and all the dear friends and relations there. He then continued,—

“Oh Caroline, what would I give to see your kind happy face at this moment! In one year more, however, I trust to be among you all again, to leave you no more. I am not, as you know, a wealthy man, but I have enough to clear away the debt I was tempted to incur on the purchase of Ardennan, and to live there in a quiet, comfortable way. I might no doubt have more, if I screwed my poor tenants to the uttermost farthing,—and let their little farms to the highest bidder. But this I will never do,—as it is neither wise nor Christian. I wish to preserve the attachment of these poor people, that I may do them some good,—conceiv-

ing that this is the purpose for which I was sent into the world, rather than to amass superfluous sums of money. In my present situation I have tried kindness, as a means of obtaining influence to effect various little, and even a few great, reforms,—and found it effectual; and if it has succeeded in a strange land, I have every reason to believe it will do the same among my own people. But I am forgetting myself, and running on too long about my own affairs,—as I too often do when I write to you, my dear, good-natured sister. By-the-bye, I hear from young Johnstone, who has just arrived in Calcutta, that you are a great belle in Edinburgh. The six years which have done nothing but add to your attractions and accomplishments, have converted me into a yellow, sunburnt, matter-of-fact old bachelor. Nothing would tempt me now to think of joining the walruses at the south pole,—or attempting to explore the wonders and the treasures of Victoria Continent. Are your migratory aspirations still pointing in that direction? Stay, I think you told me, not long ago,

that your wishes were directed towards Nineveh, Palenque, and Etruria,—places rather widely apart, a great advantage in the eyes of an adventurous character. I confess, I too should like to see the ‘shroud of ages thrown back’ on the ancient Chaldean plains, or to speculate on the history of the voiceless cities buried amid the great western forests; but I am sure I cannot convince you better of the dead prosaic level to which my mind has fallen, or of how completely and deplorably the spirit of youthful enterprise has been burnt out of me by this scorching sun, than by telling you that the Etrurian trip appears to me to be the only one in the least practicable,—or, under the necessary circumstances, desirable. In short, no one was ever more completely hum-drum than I have become. I have not one romantic enthusiasm left to soar upon,—and even at the risk of sinking in your esteem, I must not pretend to be what I am not.”

At this point Caroline laid down the letter to meditate. She had herself been a little surprised that her face flushed and

her heart beat so quickly at Malcolm's so earnestly expressed wish of seeing her, and she was now still more surprised by the way in which, after alluding to her reputed or supposed attractions, he spoke of himself so as to lead, not unnaturally, to the supposition that he had been making a comparison between them. It was the first time during the whole period of their knowledge of each other that he had ever spoken to her of himself personally, though of his thoughts and opinions he had done so frequently, and now too she could not but observe that it was with that consciousness of inferiority which is apt to be bestowed by an anxiety to please. The perception, or the fancied perception of this, both puzzled and agitated her a little, and then she said to herself, that she was "very foolish," and striving to banish the subject from her thoughts, she returned again to the perusal of her letter, which she had not nearly finished.

Again she was struck by the way in which he inquired for Violet Smythe.

"I can assure you," he said, "you may

answer me with the most perfect openness. I am able to discuss Lady Cornish with as much, perhaps greater coolness than yourself. The interest I feel in her fate is as entirely unconnected with my own life and affections, as if we inhabited different worlds,—which in one sense we do. I am curious, as about the solution of a problem in morals, to learn how her marriage has prospered. And yet not altogether on that account. Poor Violet! there was much in her character that was noble and true, and I should be most sincerely glad to hear that she had not been unhappy, for her own sake, and for the sake of the past—a past which, however, seems more entirely cut off from the present, than any other part of my previous life. Now, Caroline, when I look back on that time, your kind sympathy seems the only real thing connected with it; your friendship by far the most precious legacy it has left me.”

Here Caroline laid down the letter again, in an unusual excitement of feeling. Malcolm had never written to her thus before—had never thus expressly told her

of the esteem and regard in which he held her. She knew well how sincere he was, how unlike him it was to express more, or, in direct terms, even as much as he felt. She was intensely gratified, and yet she very earnestly strove to crush down certain vague hopes—certain dim, wild visions, which came unbidden to send the blood to her cheeks, and to disturb the quiet current of her thoughts. And then, such is human inconsistency and human—folly, shall we call it?—that in the very midst of these efforts she suddenly rose and—yes—actually looked in the glass!

“I wish,” she thought, “they had not told him I was handsome, as he will certainly be disappointed in my appearance. Yet I do not think I look old, and he will be home in a year. I shall then be twenty-five. One has hardly begun to look old at twenty-five.”

Then with some complacency she began to arrange her shining brown ringlets, till suddenly, and as if ashamed of herself, she turned away, ejaculating half aloud, “What a weak, vain, silly thing I am!” And taking down from her shelf a gravo

book, she sat down to school her mind by its perusal into a sober, sensible frame, fitted to take an interest in the performance of the every-day duties of life. I am bound to say, however, that her success in this laudable pursuit was by no means complete, as her mind did not quite recover its equilibrium all that day, and at night she lost three hours' sleep in thinking of Malcolm's letter.

Was it possible she could have been mistaken in supposing that the love she had once felt had settled down into the calm of mere sisterly affection ?

CHAPTER XIII.

CAROLINE had now ceased to be a governess, as she found she could employ her time more profitably, as well as more congenially ; for, though she had become interested in her pupils and their progress, she had no natural taste for the occupation of teaching. For five years she had studied, and practised hard at her painting ; but the study and the practice had been likewise her greatest pleasure. Many of her leisure hours, too, had been healthily as well as happily spent in studying the various aspects of nature, that her works might possess that truthfulness which is the greatest charm of art, and without which the most skilful composition, or the most faultless colouring

are powerless to touch the feelings, however they may satisfy the taste, scientifically or artificially cultivated. She had also taken advantage of one or two visits she had paid to Locharroch, in company with her father and sister, to familiarise herself more thoroughly with the various phases of highland scenery. It was during the last of those visits that she had fulfilled the design conceived so many years before, of taking a view of Loch Achquaigh. Several weeks after her return she had devoted to working it up and finishing it. All her powers she lavished upon it; all possible pains she bestowed upon it. The Major and Agnes pronounced it a masterpiece, and were both very earnest that she should exhibit it. Indeed, for the last two or three years, they had both, more especially the former, been quite surprised that she did not exhibit her pictures.

“You are far too modest, Caroline,” her father would say; “they are quite as good as any there, and a great deal better than some; and as to their refusing them admittance, — set them up

truly. They might be proud to have them."

"I think, my dear," Agnes would add, "nothing can be nicer than your drawings. I have thought so for a long time, and I don't see at all how you expect to improve. I agree with papa, and do not see why you should object to exhibit them, if it is likely to add to your reputation."

But although Caroline had never yet exhibited, she had painted various little pictures and sets of views for persons with whom she was acquainted, or to whom, through the kindness of friends, she had been introduced; and as they had always given satisfaction, she had for the last year or two been able to realise a little income, which, slender though it was, was greater than she could obtain by teaching. At last, however, she made up her mind to apply for leave to exhibit; and her little picture, partly through the merit it undeniably possessed, partly through the little reputation she had already obtained, and the exertions of one or two friends possessed of some influence, obtained a tolerably good situation.

It attracted considerable admiration ; and that was a joyful day for the young artist, upon which she received the offer of a handsome sum for it—not so much on account of the money, as on account of the evidence of success the offer afforded. But she would not sell the picture. No ; it had been the fond hope, the bright vision of all these years, to paint this picture for Malcolm, and her greatest joy was now to find that this gift was considered to be something worth having. It was her best, and she was glad of it, for less than her best she would not have liked to have given to him.

Catherine was now perforce obliged to believe that Caroline could be an artist. She said, and, indeed, she was sincerely glad that the latter had hit upon a means of making a livelihood ; but she never could be brought to confess, or indeed to believe, that her sister-in-law's pictures were beyond “ well enough,” or “ rather pretty.” She “ could see nothing extraordinary in them.” As a rule, she did not approve of young ladies bringing their productions before the public. It was

very apt to turn their heads. For her part, it was a point of conscience with her not to praise Caroline's drawings to herself, for she heard more in that style already than was good for her. Still, as Caroline found that people were willing to purchase her drawings, she was quite right, situated as she was, to sell them; and, with all her faults, there was no denying Caroline was a very good daughter, and an industrious, sweet-tempered girl, and she was very fond of her, and "it would be a thousand pities if her head were turned."

Mrs. Hunter expressed herself delighted with the success of her former *protégée*. She flew all over the town, sweetly and fervently drawling out to everybody — "Have you seen Caroline Irvine's picture? You must go; now I insist upon it. I am quite proud of it. Long ago I observed the genius of that girl. Mr. William Ross, who is a young man of great taste, and has been on the Continent, and very intimate with foreign artists, says, it is beautiful; and I insist on everybody thinking my Caroline's picture beau-

tiful. I insist on all my friends everywhere *saying* it is beautiful. I will not hear of it having a fault. And there is a mystery, too, about it,—it is to be sent abroad, to a gentleman. I rather suspect there is something in that quarter. I know she writes to India every mail. I suspect she would not still have been Caroline Irvine had there not been some engagement. Poor George Smythe was over head and ears, and lots of other men, I know, are dying for her. The Rosses agree with me in thinking there is something under that highland view; for though the gentleman, they say, met with a disappointment at one time, he was quite devoted to Caroline afterwards."

Mrs. Hunter's intimacy with the Rosses had continued steadily to increase. Her friendship for William and Isabella knew no bounds; she could do nothing without them. With the rest of the family, also, she had become intimate, although these two were her chief favourites. Mrs. Ross, she said, was "such a nice, motherly, old-fashioned person. She was *so* fond of dear Mrs. Ross; and Mr. Ross was

a very superior man, and could not help having been unfortunate."

The Ross family were in return much gratified by the acquaintance. Mrs. Ross, because it afforded some amusement and pleasure to the "young folk"; the rest of the family chiefly because it was genteel. Mr. Ross, of course, thought Mrs. Hunter only a few removes from an idiot; still he treated her with the greatest attention, and felt much gratified by her notice of his children, as she was undeniably a woman of good fortune and position, and he was more solicitous — more miserably solicitous on that score than ever. Perhaps, through her, his children might yet make good marriages,—might yet secure a good position in society. Poor Mr. Ross! he still clung to the worship of the god of this world, even while he writhed beneath the galling bondage of this perhaps worst form of idolatry.

"Willie" and Isabella thought Mrs. Hunter a nonpareil, and, in the supposed-inferior circles in which they occasionally mixed, always spoke of her as "our sweet friend," "dearest Mrs. Hunter;" and

neither of the two ever got through a quadrille without mentioning her. Even the Countess Ida and Alphonse de Vervier were completely thrown into the shade.

Maria, too, said she was "a charming person, a woman of great refinement and much elegance of mind, though not of that deep, passionate soul, with which alone she could have entire congeniality; but *that* she had now ceased to hope to find on earth." Maria had now recovered her former health, though still she frequently referred to "the dark story of her heart's life." But Maria was not happy. Now she felt more keenly than at first, when one great disappointment seemed to have swallowed up all minor griefs, the change in her circumstances and position. Although affecting the most profound apathy on the subject, indeed a sort of contempt of the very idea, Maria was in reality very anxious to be married, and with dismay saw herself on the borders of twenty-seven, without having an eligible opportunity of changing her condition. One or two admirers she had had, for

Maria had never any objection to indulge in a sentimental flirtation when it came in her way; but they had been for the most part university students, or subaltern officers from the marching regiment in the Castle; and, with all her loftiness of soul, and tragic disdain of sublunary well-being, no one set a higher value on vulgar coin than Maria Ross. Handsome, sentimental young men she liked, and had they had money or station, could have loved, strange as it may seem, without pretence. Had she been wealthy herself, it is quite probable she might have married a poor, poetic student, or a handsome penniless sub.; but till the matter began to grow desperate, she could not bring herself to relinquish the hope of a good establishment. The idea of darning stockings, economising candle-ends, managing unruly children, and sinking from a poetical, interesting, young lady into a household drudge, of no social consequence whatever, was both in a romantic and worldly point of view insupportable to Maria. Still she must be married,—if not to a handsome, poetical, rich man, then to one who was

rich without being handsome or poetical. Married thus, she might still recline upon a damask sofa and read poetry,—still be an interesting, fascinating, intellectual, though disappointed, woman. It was all, she felt, that she could hope for now, if even that was to be obtained. But, at all events, she must be married before she was thirty. She shuddered as she contemplated the possibility of her ever becoming a poor, neglected, old maid ; and would occasionally, when she was alone, shed real and bitter tears over her past glories.

Poor Maria had not that happy *insouciance* of her brother and sister, which afforded no point for misfortune to grasp at, nor had she the simple tastes and affections which rendered it almost equally powerless to affect her mother, as long as her husband and children, and the ordinary comforts of life, were left to her. With the stronger passions and intenser feelings of her father, she inherited also his pride, ambition, and worldliness, and, like him, she suffered in proportion to

the manner in which these were humiliated.

For a time, after she had recovered from the effects of her unfortunate attachment to Arthur Cornish, her spirits had been kept up by the notion of retrieving her fortunes by marriage; but now as month by month and season by season her hopes grew fainter, she became miserable and restless, and was occasionally sunk in a sort of irritable melancholy. She went a good deal into company,—and when there, still affected the same tragic style as in former days; but without the same faith in or zest for the affectation. With much to make her happy—a comfortable home, kind parents, health and leisure—Maria Ross was as miserable a woman as could well be. And there are many such as she. A love of social importance is one of the commonest passions in the unregenerate human heart; and where a woman is not born to it, there is hardly any way in which she can hope to attain it save by marriage. This is the only way, together perhaps with want

of mental occupation—that fruitful source of all evil—of accounting for the absolute mania which prevails among some women on the subject of marriage, and the many wretched marriages which are its natural consequences.

One morning, a few months after the arrival of Malcolm's letter, mentioned in the last chapter, Caroline went to call on Mrs. Hunter. She found that lady seated *tête-à-tête* with Mr. William Ross. It struck her, on entering, that they looked both a little confused, and as if they had been caught. Mrs. Hunter's cheeks, which though preserving their pink hue, had lost now nearly all their freshness, and along with the rest of her once smooth skin, had become somewhat shrivelled, were many shades deeper in colour; her handsome lilac silk dress was slightly deranged, as if she had sat down in a hurry; and her whole manner was unusually flurried.

"I am so glad to see you, my dearest Caroline," she said, with a smile of ineffable sweetness, accompanied with a sort of languishing conscious glance, "I—oh!

I declare I forgot what I was going to say—he! he!"

Mr. William Ross now set a chair for Caroline with his usual politeness, then picked up Mrs. Hunter's embroidered pocket-handkerchief, and presented it to her with the utmost gallantry and devotion,—but it struck Caroline, with greater familiarity than usual.

"Thank you," said Mrs. Hunter, putting on one of the baby airs, which in a woman above forty were rather out of place,—

"He! he! now you may go, for we don't want *you* any longer, do we, Caroline? We shan't plague ourselves with you—he! he!—but you may come back in the evening—I give you leave; but I *must* have Isabella—I must, positively—and I forbid you on pain of my displeasure to appear without her. Now, go away—you—"

And she concluded by pouting in the prettiest infantine style imaginable.

"Your commands," answered Willie with his most devotedly-fascinating manner, "however cruel they may be, are laws to me. Loveliest and cruellest of women,

I obey your harsh mandate, and leave Miss Irvine to the enjoyment of the most enviable society in the world. I shall return without fail in the evening, and will bring Isabella with me, if she should be alive. Adieu."

Mrs. Hunter languidly held out her hand, which the gallant youth pressed fervently to his lips. He was hardly out of the room, when she frisked playfully after him, saying something about music, and following him into the passage, had there a full five minutes' whispering and tittering ere she returned. Caroline sat meanwhile in silent surprise, partly guessing what this must mean, yet hardly able to believe it, when Mrs. Hunter returned, and set the matter at rest by saying,—

"Is not he a delightful creature? My sweetest Caroline! I esteem myself a most fortunate woman. It will be so nice for the dear children; and though perhaps I might have looked a little higher, still he is so accomplished, such distinguished manners, and has mixed so much with the foreign nobility and people of genius! And really a woman of my age requires a

protector, and I do not think among my admirers I could have selected one more suitable. But do not say anything about it, my dear, as the event, though William, poor fellow, is very impatient, cannot take place for several months, and I would not mention it to anybody but yourself; people make such a talking about everything—I am sure I wonder how they can be so fond of gossiping. By-the-bye, Caroline, I must, I positively *must* have you and dear Isabella married; I am sure I wonder you are not—so odd that I should”—(with a self-satisfied smile, which seemed to contradict the words)—“but there is no accounting for things. I thought I had got George Smythe a few years ago for you; I was quite disappointed his regiment got away before he came to the point.—What a deal I shall have to do about my *trousseau*! But, by-the-bye, my love, you have not told me what you think of it all?”

Caroline, who thought it very absurd, avoided giving a direct answer by saying that she wished Mrs. Hunter every possible happiness, but that she had taken her

quite by surprise, and that Mr. William Ross was very good-looking, amiable, and steady.

“He is so much in love, poor fellow,” continued Mrs. Hunter, “you have no idea of it; I really could not have had the heart to refuse him. But you are not going away?—I had thousands of things to say.”

Caroline replied that she must go, as she must write a letter before post-time; Mrs. Hunter would not, however, permit her to depart till she had exacted a promise from her that she would call again before the end of the week. She then inquired,—

“Have you heard lately from your friend, Lady Cornish?”

Caroline answered that she had.

“And what does she say?” continued Mrs. Hunter, who, although she had never seen Lady Cornish in her life, always seemed to take a deep interest in everything concerning her.

“She wishes me to visit her, either at Harbury during the winter, or in London in the spring.”

“Of course you will go?”

"I do not know yet. She has frequently invited me before, but I have never yet been able to go."

"Oh, but you must go—I insist upon it. No saying but you may meet George Smythe."

Caroline laughed. "That is no very great inducement, though he was certainly agreeable enough."

Mrs. Hunter shook her head, and Caroline took leave.

Mrs. Hunter had not conveyed quite the correct idea of the state of feeling between herself and Mr. William Ross. The truth of the matter was, she had fallen in love with him, or at least paid him court, and his vanity of every kind had not been able to withstand the temptation of marrying a woman, who though at least ten years older than himself, possessed a tolerably handsome jointure, was well-born, well-connected, and visited in "the best circles of Edinburgh."

END OF VOL. II.

THE HEIR OF ARDENNAN.

A STORY OF DOMESTIC LIFE
IN SCOTLAND.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "ANNE DYSART."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE HEIR OF ARDENNAN.

CHAPTER I.

CAROLINE IRVINE had had many invitations from Lady Cornish, but hitherto she had declined them all. During nearly seven years they had kept up a regular though not very frequent correspondence. Violet's letters were not usually very long, but they invariably contained assurances of undiminished affection, very earnest requests for answers, and frequently pressing invitations. They were also sometimes very entertaining, containing lively descriptions of the places and persons around her, seasoned with *piquante* remarks, which, though often clever, and always

amusing, sometimes conveyed to the mind of her correspondent, — why, the latter could not tell,—a sort of painful impression. There was something about them embittered, satirical, restless, as if the mind of the writer was not at peace with itself, or in harmony with the circumstances by which she was surrounded. Yet Violet never said or even hinted that she was unhappy, indeed, never spoke about herself at all. The old reserve, which she had but once broken through, and yet that once so completely as to have revealed her whole inner life, seemed again to have gathered round her. In her first letter to Caroline, she had, as we have seen, spoken of herself as supremely happy. She had never directly said so in any subsequent epistle; but from the manner in which she spoke of her husband, whose name she frequently mentioned, and from the whole tone and style of her communications, Caroline was led to infer that her happiness had undergone no diminution. By degrees, however, she ceased to write in the same open, easy style, ceased to speak of “Arthur,” and

until the letter alluded to in the end of the last chapter, had not for two or three years even mentioned his name. After having pressingly invited Caroline to visit her, she now wrote,—“We must go to town early in the season, on account of Sir Arthur’s parliamentary duties, that is on account of his wishing to make some brilliant speeches on the —— question, and be reported in the newspapers. Do you remember the time, Caroline, when I assured you that Sir Arthur was not vain. I have changed my mind now. He despises, as he used to do, the opinions of insignificant people, and petty tributes to his self-esteem, (not that I am certain, however, that he would pardon the omission of them,) but I never saw any one more ambitious of the applause of the great or of the public, all the while that he affects a haughty contempt for it. Of course, as Sir Arthur and I are a very fashionable couple, there is no necessity for my accompanying him to town. I go because London is not so dull as the country,—at least there is a sort of variety in its monotony, which makes the day

seem less oppressively long. In the whirl of London life one can occasionally cease to think, and that is the utmost now I ever hope for—except to see you, my dearest friend; for if a fashionable wife, I am no fashionable friend, and I only speak the simple truth, when I say there is nothing I so much desire as to see you. You used to say you could not afford the journey, and you were too proud to allow me to frank you. You are richer now, but if you still cannot afford the requisite sum, let me lend it to you, if you will not receive it as a gift.”

After some hesitation, and a good deal of consultation, it was agreed that Caroline should accept this invitation, and go to London after Easter. Her father and sister were, indeed, very anxious that she should go, as they thought it would give her pleasure, and afford her an opportunity of seeing a little of the world. Caroline, too, was not indifferent to the many pleasures and advantages to be obtained by a visit to London. To her still ardent and sanguine mind, the idea was full of attractions. Then Lady Cor-

nish seemed so anxious to see her; her tone had been almost beseeching. It seemed to Caroline, that now she could afford it, it would be almost cruel to refuse. She was more convinced than ever that Violet was unhappy, and she hoped that perhaps she might be able to afford her some comfort. She had been a good deal shocked by the way in which the latter had spoken of her husband. Altogether this letter had given her a clearer insight into her friend's heart than she had obtained for years; but the insight was a painful one. Caroline felt that she must go to her; and she wrote, promising to be in London in the end of April.

Malcolm Gordon was expected to be in Britain about the end of May, and the whole Irvine family had been invited to Locharroch in the autumn to meet him. The prospect of seeing him so soon was far more exciting to Caroline even than the visit to London. Mrs. Hunter's marriage, too, was to take place in April, so that the approaching summer promised altogether to be an eventful one.


The Purveses are, I think, now the

only persons concerned in my narrative, whom I have not directly or indirectly brought before the notice of my reader since we took that six years' leap down the stream of time. The world had prospered, or at least seem to prosper, with them since then. Having got a discharge from his creditors, Mr. Purves had again entered into business, had managed to obtain one or two good stewardships, or factorships, as they are more generally called in Scotland, and in short, to all outward appearance, was as in days of yore. His wife and daughter were little changed, and as finely dressed as ever. Now, however, after having flirted and schemed most indefatigably during all these six, or rather seven years, the latter was about to attain the grand object of her existence, and to be married to the identical Lillie, to whom the reader has already been introduced. The gentlemen in question was possessed of a small independent fortune, the greater part of which he had invested in stocking and improving one of the large corn farms, so common in the south of Scotland, having obtained, as

is also common in that part of the country, a lease of nineteen years from the proprietor. There was a handsome new house upon this farm, handsomely furnished, in which Lillie had now been established nearly two years. During all that period, Miss Purves had danced at him, dressed at him, talked at him, and finally, seconded by the efforts of her mother and all the family, had fairly driven him to a proposal. The marriage was to take place in April, the week after Mrs. Hunter's, and Caroline had been invited to Wetherstone to be bridesmaid. Maria Ross had also received an invitation to be present on the joyful occasion.

The Purveses had for some time been quite reconciled to the Rosses. The latter were now, according to Mrs. Purves, "a most *delightful* family — most *genteel* people, who lived in a *most elegant* style at Leith; nothing to be sure like what they once did, when they kept their *two* carriages, and *three livery* servants. They could not help their *misfortunes* any more than other people." The reason of this favourable change in the sentiments of

Mrs. Purves towards the family had been occasioned by Jane's having been invited to Leith one spring to spend a few weeks. It had struck the good-hearted Mrs. Ross, that, as the misfortunes of the Purves family had been occasioned in a manner by her husband, she ought to endeavour to show her concern for it by paying them some attention ; and situated as the families respectively were, she could think of no other way than by asking Miss Purves to pay them a visit. The Purveses now returned this civility by inviting Maria to the wedding. Maria declared it would be "a sad trial to her ; but she would go through with it. She had long been inured to suffering. It was her doom, as it is the doom of all finer natures." As she could not appear in black at a wedding, she prepared a dress of dead white, with a veil to match. This dress was first to be worn at her brother's marriage, and was then to appear at that of Jane Purves. The poor girl was not without hope that it might make an impression on some heart at one or other of the weddings. Maria's



aims were now much humbler than they had been a few years ago, ever since the fall of her fortunes. Several suitors whom she had once discouraged she would now gladly have taken; she was twenty-eight, and she felt that she must trifle with destiny no longer, but accept the first that offered, if he was of respectable character, and possessed a competence. The vision of the damask sofa, the silken robes, poetical musings, and elegant melancholy was well-nigh over.

I shall pass over Mrs. Hunter's wedding with its bouquets of orange flowers, and robes of finest lace, its smiles and sighs, sensibilities and affectations, the languishing sweetness of the bride, the devotion of the bridegroom, the half-doubtful pleasure of Mrs. Ross, who had never felt perfectly satisfied with the marriage, the excitement of Isabella, the outward sublimity and inward anxiety of Maria, and the satisfaction of Mr. Ross, senior. As the latter surveyed his new made daughter-in-law, as she fell in a sort of elegant swoon into the arms of her young bridegroom, he felt an

entire conviction of what he had frequently suspected before, namely, that she was a perfect fool. Nevertheless he was quite satisfied with the marriage, for Mrs. William Ross was rich and moved in "the best society." It was like a momentary gleam gilding the gloomy wreck of his ambition.

Three days after the wedding, Caroline and Maria set out in company for Wetherstone. The former was not to return, but to go straight from Wetherstone to London. They found the whole Purves family in a great bustle of preparation. Notwithstanding the receiving and paying of visits, the talking, the scolding, the hurrying to and fro, the trying of dresses, the noise and the scramble,—the mother and daughter, except in moments of irritation, were both in a very good humour, and full of gratified importance. Mr. Purves had entirely recovered his brisk, consequential smirk, stuck himself into a greater variety of easy attitudes than ever, and had for many weeks been conning over a long speech for the wedding-dinner, in which he intended to

mention at least three times, that his niece Miss Caroline Irvine, daughter of Major Irvine, was on her way to spend the London season with Lady Cornish, the wife of Sir Arthur Cornish, of Harbury, "a gentleman whom we have had the honour of entertaining in our unpretending way."

This piece of intelligence was more especially intended for the benefit of some of "Lillie's friends and relations," who were to be present on the happy occasion. Mrs. Purves was not altogether pleased at the prospect of this visit of Caroline. It certainly shed a sort of aristocratic lustre over the whole connection; but then Caroline would be so "set up" by it, and the Major would be more absurdly vain of her than ever. Still as Jane was going to be married and Caroline was not, the balance of importance and superiority was undoubtedly in favour of the former; so that weighing the advantages and disadvantages, the scale seemed upon the whole to turn in its favour. However, when no strangers were present, and the topic was touched upon, she never lost

the opportunity of depreciating Sir Arthur and Lady Cornish, by way of "keeping down" Caroline.

"Lady Cornish," she would say, "was only a merchant's daughter—nothing very grand in that, I am sure; and there was Johnny Grey, that was once a laddie in Kyle's shop, and got to be Lord Mayor of London, was made a *Sir*. It is a *very common* thing now-a-days. I think *nothing* of it—*nothing*!"

Caroline remembered the time when she would have been somewhat incensed at such remarks: now, she was only amused by them, and sometimes a little saddened. According to the mood she was in, or the point of view in which she regarded them, she felt sometimes inclined to laugh at, sometimes to pity the frame of mind whence they proceeded. To Maria, however, all mention of Sir Arthur or Lady Cornish, was evidently very painful, and whenever the subject was introduced, on her account Caroline endeavoured to turn the conversation. To Maria, indeed, the Purves family were nearly as intolerable as to Caroline; nevertheless she was

wonderfully cordial to them, and declared that she enjoyed "the seclusion of the country." Maria's society was upon the whole a great acquisition to Caroline, for when they were alone and the latter was not absent, and occupied by her own restless, unsatisfied thoughts, she dropped her affectation, and was chatty and pleasant. She liked Caroline, and the closer contact into which she was thus brought with the healthier mind of the latter, often made her feel happier. It did occasionally even glance across her thoughts, that there was much folly in her own unhappiness, and that if she could only disengage her heart from those vain, worldly, and vulgar objects upon which its affections were set, and be active and occupied like Caroline, she too might have the same cheerful spirit. For in what worldly respect had Caroline the advantage of her?

It was now the wedding-day. The ceremony was to be performed in the drawing-room at three o'clock in the afternoon, and after the departure of the happy pair, there was to be a dinner at

five. A few minutes after the appointed time, Lillie lounged into the room, with his eye-glass in his eye, stretching out his neck, and staring all round.

“Delighted to see you, sir,” said Mr. Purves, rubbing his hands, and advancing briskly to meet him, “though you are going to take away the brightest ornament of our house.”

“Ha—ha—ha!” responded Mr. Lillie, in his most unmeaning way; “one begins to feel deucedly queer when it draws so near—nervous and that kind of thing. Ha! ha!”

Mr. John Purves next advanced to welcome his brother-in-law elect. He was as helpless and good-natured looking as ever, and now, with his shining face, white shirt, and blue coat had very much the air of having been newly scrubbed and polished all over. He sat with his mouth open and usually staring at his cousin Caroline, when the latter was in the room. At last Mr. Purves vanished from the apartment, and returned in a few minutes with the bride and her attendant bridesmaids. Jane, with more than her usual supply of

flounces and ends of ribbon, and an extra number of the long black ringlets, wriggled into the room, shaking the skirt of her dress behind in a peculiar fashion, as she moved. The ceremony then began. All the time of the minister's address, the bride remained in her favourite attitude, staring at the window-cornice, with the whites of her eyes turned up. Once or twice, however, particularly at her bridesmaids, she darted round a glance of triumph. Lillie looked decidedly nervous.

The great wedding-cake was cut up at dinner, and Caroline got the ring, a little to the annoyance of Mrs. Purves; but to judge from the congratulations and merriment, greatly to the satisfaction of the rest of the party. John Purves in particular seemed quite excited, and even ventured to cheer and thump the table, and then laughed shyly at his unwonted temerity.

In the evening there was dancing, and the ball was opened by Caroline Irvine the bridesmaid, and John Purves, the bridegroom's man. After the dance was over, the latter invited his partner to go

into the refreshment-room. She replied that she did not want any refreshment.

"Oh! will you not?" he said with an air of disappointment. "You know you need not take anything unless you like."

"If you really wish to go," answered Caroline good-humouredly, for she had a feeling of sincere good-will towards poor John, who was always very obliging and good-natured, "I am sure I have no objection."

His face brightened up. "Thank you, Caroline. You have such a good temper."

They were now out of the room.

"I don't care particularly about going to the refreshment-room, Caroline. I wanted—in short, I wanted to say something to you, and I know a far better place, in mother's store-room, where we shall be quite snug, and no fear of other people."

Caroline looked surprised. "Cannot you say what you wish here?"

"No, no. I would rather not. Oh! will you not come, Caroline?"

A little amused, and a little curious to

know what John could possibly have to say to her, Caroline consented. He led her into a sort of store-closet, with a window, surrounded by great wooden cupboards, and a *meal-ark* at one end. John found a box for Caroline to sit upon, while he was fain to content himself with an empty cask, which lay upon its side. Altogether the apartment and the furniture were rather incongruous with the gala dresses of the present tenants. For a second or two they sat quite silent. At last, hardly able to avoid a smile at the absurdity of this conference and its accompaniments, Caroline inquired,

“ Well, John, what have you got to say to me ? ”

“ Say ! Oh !—I—so you got the ring, Caroline. Was it a gold one ? ”

“ Gold ! no. I do not think it was. ”

“ Should you like to have a gold one ? ” As John spoke, he blushed like a peony.

Caroline laughed. “ I really never thought whether I should like it or not. I dare say if it had been gold it might

have been useful as a guard to this emerald one."

John sighed, and looked hopelessly stupid, awkward, and silent. At last he said, "Do you know, Caroline, my father has taken me into partnership?"

"This must be what he wished to tell me," thought Caroline, "though why I must be closeted up in this strange fashion to hear it, I cannot guess."

"I am very glad to hear it indeed."

"Are you, are you really, dear cousin Caroline?"

"Yes, it shows that he must consider you steady and trustworthy."

John's face brightened up amazingly. "I am glad you think so, Caroline. I am not so clever as some folks, perhaps, but I am sure I always try to do my best."

"I am sure you do, my dear John."

"Thank you, dear Caroline," he said, colouring again a rosy red, and looking awkwardly down. After a short pause he again commenced; "He allows me two hundred a-year."

"I am happy to hear it. That is quite a large income."

“ You think one could live on that—comfortably I mean.”

“ Certainly. I think *you* could live on a great deal less. Papa, and Agnes, and I live on two hundred a-year, and though we missed a few things at first, we never feel the want of them now. It is quite a fortune for a single man like you,” she added gaily.

“ A single man!” he repeated in a doleful tone, and with a fallen countenance. “ But I—I—in short I thought it might be enough for—perhaps with a clever person to manage it—for—for—” And John again looked sheepishly down.

Caroline now looked straight at him with her frank, kind, merry eyes. “ We three live upon it, I told you, John. But you are not thinking of marrying, are you ?”

John’s face had now become almost purple. One might easily have fancied, both from its colour and expression, that some one was strangling him, or that he was on the point of choking.

Caroline hastened to relieve him by taking the point for granted. “ I am much

obliged by your confidence, John. It is very kind to your old playfellow. You and I were always great friends. Who is the lady?" Still no answer. John's head was bent still more determinedly down, while his large flat ears rivalled in hue the colour given by the most brilliant cochineal. "Is it Miss Laing, or Jessie Henderson, or ——"

John now looked up, the very picture of awkwardness, shyness, and misery. Every vein was swollen, and the perspiration stood in drops upon his face, while, with mouth open and eyes staring helplessly round, he drew a long breath between a sigh and a groan, and then cried in a desperate, though husky voice, "No, no, none of them, Caroline! Caroline! oh cousin Caroline! oh!"

Caroline blushed almost as deeply as John, and with a sudden impulse, rising from the wooden box on which she was seated, would have left the little apartment. Simultaneously, however, John slid down from the barrel, on which he had hitherto, with difficulty, contrived to balance himself, and hastily placing him-

self between her and the door, actually, in his fine wedding-clothes knelt down on the floury uncarpeted floor at her feet, and detaining her by her dress, exclaimed in an agony of desperation,—

“ Oh Caroline! dear, dear Caroline! I know I am not like you, who are so clever, and pretty, and good. I know I am a stupid lad, but I am not bad-natured, and I love you so, Caroline—oh, I love you so!” And he looked imploringly in her face, with a sort of helpless passion. To a spectator, there must have been something ludicrous in the scene. To have even heard it presented with all its accessories of wedding-dresses, barrels, and store-cupboards, with John plumped down on both his knees on the dirty floor, would have made Caroline laugh. But at present, and while really engaged in it, she felt more inclined to cry, for she had always had a sincere liking for her poor, good-natured cousin, and had never till this instant imagined that he entertained a warmer sentiment towards her.

“ Rise, John,” she cried; “ rise, my dear cousin, I beseech you. I am very

sorry—very, very sorry—but I hope you will soon get over this fancy, and that we shall continue the excellent friends we have always been.” But John still held by the folds of her dress, which he pressed in a sort of passionate bewilderment to his lips.

“It is no fancy, Caroline. I have loved you for years and years, ever since you were a wee lassie, and came here to play with Jane; and you were always so pretty and merry, and never quarrelled and scolded. Oh! I love you far better than anything. My heart is breaking with love for you, dear, dear Caroline.” And John burst into tears, and sobbed aloud. Caroline, too, much agitated and distressed, began to cry, while she strove gently to disengage herself. But he only held her dress the more firmly. “Oh! won’t you have me, Caroline?” he sobbed. “I love you so, won’t you have me? I might not be so clever as some husband you might get, Caroline; but I would be so fond of you. You should have everything you like, all your own way; for you are far cleverer and wiser than I am—I

know that. I will wait as long as you like, Caroline—I will do what you please, if you will only have me. Oh, dear, dear Caroline!”

Caroline had now in a measure regained her composure. She answered gently, but with much firmness,—

“My dear cousin John, I can say with perfect truth, I have never been more surprised, and seldom more grieved, than I have been to-night. I have a grateful recollection of your kindness ever since I was the wee lassie you speak of; but I owe it to that kindness and to the cousinly regard I feel, and always shall feel for you, to tell you that—that—I do not love you as a wife should love her husband, and that, therefore, I cannot marry you.”

Here poor John uttered a low cry of pain, which went to Caroline’s heart. The tears again sprang to her eyes, as she held out her hand to her cousin. He took it, and kissed it fondly, while his tears fell hot and thick upon it.

“I am the most miserable creature in the whole world,” he sobbed out. “Oh, Caroline!”

"I am afraid, John," said the latter, trying to speak calmly, and to repress her tears, "that we must return to the drawing-room. We shall be missed; and, on an occasion like the present—"

John had now risen, and was standing, his knees white with flour, and great tears running down his long, large, red nose, while his eyes and cheeks were wet and stained.

"Oh! I don't care for an occasion—I don't care what they think. I care for nothing on earth but you—and you,—oh, I shall die!" And again the poor lad began to sob afresh. Caroline withdrew her hand.

"I am heartily sorry for it," she said; "but we must go." As she spoke, she resolutely moved away; and with a last, lingering, despairing look, he allowed her to pass. She went up to her own room, and having washed the traces of the tears from her cheeks, and re-arranged her dress, she returned to the gay scene below. She could not, however, recover her former spirits, or cease thinking of the poor, disconsolate John. Ever and anon she turned her eyes towards the door, to watch for his

return; but he did not come. His disappearance now began to be commented upon. At last his mother went to look for him. She found him laid upon his face on his bed, weeping and groaning. To her inquiries, he would return no other answer than that he was ill, and could not come down. At last she asked if he had the toothache; and receiving no reply, concluded that such was his malady.

CHAPTER II.

A FEW days after the wedding, Caroline set out on her journey to London. As she left Wetherstone in the stage-coach to join the Great Eastern line of railway between the Scottish capital and the great metropolis, she was reminded of her first visit from home alone—her visit to Locharroch. She remembered, with a smile now, what a great and wonderful adventure that visit had seemed to her, and the vague, visionary, but somewhat extravagant expectations she had entertained with regard to it. At first she had felt a sort of indefinable disappointment in her highland visit—a disappointment created by the difference there is between the ideal and the real, and one to which all young persons pos-

sessed of ardent feelings and lively imaginations are liable until they have learned by experience to correct their brilliant expectations, and to make due allowance for this difference. And yet it seemed to her now, as she traced back the events and feelings of the last few years, that that visit had been an even more important era in her life than she had then imagined, as to it and to the impulses it had given, was owing in no small degree the present development of her mind and character. She now began to speculate in what way this new visit to London might affect her—what new incidents or changes it might be productive of, and whether she should be disappointed in the expectations she entertained of the wonders of that most wonderful place upon earth, the great modern Babylon. As ardent, as enterprising, as fond as ever of adventure, as eager for objects upon which to exercise her ever active mind, and as capable as ever of drawing bright pictures of that which was to be, Caroline had not quite the same faith in them, and even on the far horizon could

discern the dim speck which might yet gather into the gloom of disappointment.

It was late at night when, emerging from a long tunnel, she began to draw near London. Although she was a good deal fatigued by the long, dull journey—one of the dullest journeys imaginable—she was quite aroused and revived by the idea, that she was, indeed, so near that grand emporium of wealth, talent, and magnificence. She looked from the carriage windows abroad upon the darkness, straining her eyes to catch the first glimpse of the lights of London. And again, at that moment, she thought of the scene of her former visit, by the lonely loch amid the pine-woods and the wild Scottish mountains; and then she thought of her Edinburgh home, of her father, sister, and good, faithful Peggy, and as she thought she wept. They seemed all at so immense a distance. In the excitement of feeling called up by the idea, she failed to observe what a few minutes before she had been so anxious to see, the suburban lights twink-

ling at a little distance on each side of the line. At last she caught a glimpse of them, and all her former interest returned. "London, really London," she said to herself, when she suddenly found herself between two high brick walls, so high, that at night one might easily have fancied oneself in another tunnel. They had now been deprived of their engine, and were going down the great inclined plane to Euston-square station. In a few minutes more she found herself in that palace of railway stations, standing on the platform in a sort of bewilderment at the crowd, the carriages, the lights, the bustle, and the noise by which she was surrounded. A gentleman fellow-passenger now offered her his assistance to get a cab, or to inquire if any one was waiting for her. She asked him to inquire if Lady Cornish's carriage was in attendance, as Violet had promised to send it for her. It was there, and in a few minutes Caroline was rolling along the streets of London, on her way to Mount-street, in which was situated the town residence of Sir Arthur Cornish.

make no further apology, hoping that I shall have many future opportunities of enjoying your society." Then turning to his wife, and as if resolved to force her to speak, he said, and with truth, for Caroline wished to be left alone with Violet. "Miss Irvine seems to approve of the arrangement; I trust it meets with your approbation."

She answered with a cold, unmoved haughtiness of manner, "Neither Miss Irvine nor I wish to retain your company, if you can bestow it more agreeably elsewhere."

Sir Arthur's dark eye flashed momentarily, as if with anger; but recovering himself almost instantly, he turned to Caroline, and shaking hands with her with all his former suavity, wished her "Good night." He then turned to his wife, repeating the same salutation, and making a little movement, as if he would have shaken hands with her, too. But without taking the slightest notice, she merely answered, "Good night," in a tone of cold carelessness, and then turned her head in another direction.

Again his brows darkened, and he darted at her a hasty glance of the bitterest anger, but without speaking left the room.

As soon as he was gone, Violet rose, and throwing her arms round Caroline, pressed her to her heart with a tightness and fervour which were almost painful. For some minutes her emotion seemed to prevent her speaking, but at last she exclaimed, in an excited manner, while she even kissed Caroline's hands, "I am so glad to see you, my only friend. I have longed so to see you; I have never told you how much I have longed to see you." Then seeming forcibly to command her feelings, she continued, "I did not think I should have given way in this manner. How selfish I am! And you must be so tired, and so much in need of refreshment. Will you have dinner or tea?"

Caroline chose the latter, and Lady Cornish, having rung the bell, and ordered "Tea immediately," continued:

"And now you must disencumber yourself a little; I have ordered lights to

your room, and I shall act the part of *femme-de-chambre* myself, as I cannot part with you for a minute to-night."

Caroline was much refreshed by a cup of tea, after which she and Violet sat and talked for an hour about the highlands, the Rosses, and, at last, Malcolm Gordon.

On all these subjects Violet spoke with interest, yet with perfect composure. From her voice and manner, one could not have guessed whether or not she regretted the past. At last she inquired, "You say you correspond with Mr. Gordon. He is not married?"

"No."

"I trust he has completely got over the disappointment he had through my folly and selfishness?"

"I believe he has, Violet."

"I am glad of it," she answered, earnestly; but a second afterwards she sighed as if involuntarily.

"He inquired for you not long ago. He speaks kindly of you."

"He is good. Oh, Caroline! — but those who have sown the wind must

expect to reap the whirlwind. But I am not going to annoy you this first night with talking about anything disagreeable. You look tired, Caroline. Will you go to bed?"

Caroline assented at once to this proposal. She was very glad to rest,—and soon fell fast asleep. When the maid called her at a late hour on the following morning, she was still in a confused dream about railways, stations, home, Wetherstone, her father, and Agnes,—who seemed, by some strange metamorphosis, suddenly to become John Purves and Maria Ross; and, anon, Sir Arthur and Lady Cornish. On awakening, she was for a few seconds possessed by that wondering sensation, so common after a sound sleep in a strange place, as to where she could be. She had a confused notion that she was somewhere that she had never been before. At last she remembered,—and then by degrees began to recall the events and conversation of the previous evening.

Caroline's room was at the back of the house,—and commanded an interesting

view of the neighbouring mews. It was a raw, foggy morning, — which, from the appearance of the atmosphere, might more appropriately have been in November than April. The sun, which had now risen above the roofs of the houses in the opposite street, as it endeavoured to shine through the heavy, smoky atmosphere, was completely shorn of its beams, and looked not unlike some huge tawny orange, or pumpkin. Whether it were her cogitations or her view, or both together, Caroline's spirits were this morning a little depressed. She felt that she would have given much to see—were it only for a minute—her father and Agnes, or even Catherine and John. Everything around seemed so new and strange, so fine, so cold, so stiff, compared with home. On descending to the breakfast-room, she found it untenanted. There was, however, a blazing fire; and seating herself in an easy-chair, she took up a book, which was lying on a little table close beside it, with the intention of amusing herself till Lady Cornish should make her appearance.

The book proved to be a French novel.

Caroline had never read a French novel, and she felt a natural curiosity to judge for herself what kind of literature it was, —perfectly aware, however, that she could form no opinion, from one work, or the works of one author. She remembered, also, that Violet had once told her that she was, or at least had been, fond of French novels. She had been sitting for some time, lost in amazement at the tissue of intrigues, murders, exaggerated sentiments, and impossible events which only two or three chapters served to disclose, when she was interrupted by the entrance of her friend. The latter embraced her affectionately.

“ You are early astir after your journey. What have you got there ?” then glancing at the book. “ That will not suit your taste, I am sure.”

“ No, dear Violet,—does it suit yours ?”

“ Yes. Don’t look so shocked, Caroline. I must have excitement or I should become melancholy or mad. I find few English works which have power to interest or rouse me. I make no doubt the excitement is unhealthy, but it has

become a necessary of life to me now. At one time, life itself furnished me with so deep an interest that I did not require to look elsewhere for occupation for my thoughts or feelings. But that time is past for ever !”

“Dearest Violet,” answered Caroline, her eyes, as she spoke, shining brightly and softly, “that time is never over. One has always something to do or to bear. In the saddest moment there is the interest of striving to rise above our sorrows,—the hope, nay, with God’s help, the assurance, of victory, if we faint not.”

Violet looked at the glowing, ardent, affectionate face,—so beautiful, yet so unconscious in its earnestness, with a glance at once admiring, regretful, and unconvinced.

“You are an enthusiast, Caroline, and you are good,—I am neither. I possess within me no power of transmuting evil into good. When I am miserable, I have no way of overcoming it but by trying to forget myself and all around me. And this I can only do for a brief season by indulging in some kind of mental intoxi-

cation. It augments my disease, I have no doubt, instead of curing it; but it is past cure. I know, Caroline, that I am a wicked creature,—but I love you most sincerely; and to you, as to everybody, I am true. My soul despises falsehood, and I do not wish that you should think better of me than I deserve. Such as I am, will you continue to be my friend,—if not from esteem, from pity?”

Caroline only replied by kissing her tenderly; but she vowed in her heart that, while she should remain in London, her chief object should be to endeavour to win that poor heart to better and happier thoughts. Now that she saw Lady Cornish by daylight, she was almost shocked to perceive the change time had made. The complexion, formerly so delicately fair and smooth, was now yellow and faded. She was miserably thin; the colour had disappeared entirely from her cheeks and lips, her blue eyes had lost their clearness, and the liveliness of her expression was replaced by a look of anxiety which seemed fixed and habitual. Her manner, however, was perfectly self-possessed, and

it seemed to Caroline a shade haughtier (though not to her) than in former days.

They now sat down to breakfast. Caroline inquired if Sir Arthur had breakfasted.

"No," returned Violet; "he has not yet made his appearance, I believe. We seldom or never breakfast together. I like a family circle at breakfast; but in this, as in all other things, Sir Arthur prefers that we should be perfectly independent. In short, Caroline, except that my husband and I inhabit the same house, and may chance occasionally to meet upon the stairs, or now and then, perhaps, at dinner, when we have no other engagement, or that we drive in the same carriage to the same dinner-party,—we are in our movements, our engagements, our occupations, as entirely independent as any two persons in London. Do you consider this a happy state of matters between husband and wife?" Violet spoke bitterly.

Caroline looked at her sorrowfully. She hesitated how or what to answer; for she felt that she did not sufficiently under-

stand her friend's situation, to be able to give any just reply. She was conscious, moreover, that except under circumstances of extreme provocation, Violet's style of conversation was hardly warrantable. Altogether it was very clear to Caroline that she was in a most unhappy ill-regulated frame of mind. She was spared the difficulty of reply, however, by the entrance of Sir Arthur himself.

He addressed Caroline in the same tone of politeness as on the preceding night,—and then, seating himself at table, began to converse, in his most agreeable manner, on the ordinary topics of the day. As he sat opposite to Caroline, she had now an opportunity of observing how time had dealt with him. Much more leniently than with his wife, she perceived at the first glance. Sir Arthur Cornish was, if possible, a still handsomer man than he had been seven years ago. Time, which had added to his figure vigour and dignity, had not robbed it of one youthful grace. Yet there was still something haughty and scornful in the flash of his fine eyes,—something hard and contemp-

tuous in the curl of his full, finely cut lip, —something in the expression, altogether, of his dark handsome face,—which gave the idea of egotism and pride, and seemed to denote an utter absence of anything approaching benevolence. Caroline felt, more certainly now than she had done in her younger days, that, however fascinating he might be, she could never like Sir Arthur Cornish.

During breakfast, he once or twice addressed a remark or a question to his wife, but she invariably answered him in the same short, ungracious style as on the preceding night. At first he seemed to take no notice, but after a time he appeared to become angry. Violet meanwhile maintained a cold, stony, imperturbable aspect, which was certainly sufficiently provoking. Caroline could not help thinking that in this style of behaviour she was assuredly wrong. At last, for the first time, putting a question in her turn, but without altering her tone, Lady Cornish asked,—

“Do you dine at home to-day, Sir Arthur?”

“No,” he answered, “I dine . at

Herbert Cayley's, — a sort of political dinner."

"Political?" repeated Violet, becoming pale, and for the first time in her husband's presence, since Caroline's arrival, losing her impassive coldness of manner.

"Yes, Lady Cornish, political," answered her husband, while his eye flashed angrily; "why do you ask when I have told you?"

"Were the Cayleys at the opera last night?" she inquired hurriedly, and without answering the last question.

"They were. I was in Mrs. Cayley's box, where there were various other people, men and women."

"But Mrs. Herbert Cayley was there herself, and she invited you to dine with them to-day?"

"She did; and now I hope this cross-questioning is at an end."

"I hate that woman!" exclaimed Violet, with sudden vehemence; "I hate her as I would hate a poisonous serpent!"

Sir Arthur suddenly started from his seat, pale with passion. He seemed on the point of saying something violent,

but restrained himself, rejoining, in a tone of forced calmness,

“I beg, madam, you will confine your language within the bounds of common propriety when you speak of my friends, even if they should be so unfortunate as to be displeasing to you. Mrs. Herbert Cayley is a very agreeable, clever, and amiable woman, as you might have discovered, if you would have obliged me by visiting her. As you declined, however, to do me this favour, I shall not deny myself the pleasure of her society, or of visiting at her house, merely to gratify your caprice. Once for all, Lady Cornish, I will not submit to be your slave, and I warn you not to provoke me too far by your unreasonable exactions, your groundless jealousies, and your ungracious manners.”

Here Caroline, finding her position as a listener to this matrimonial dialogue exceedingly disagreeable, rose to leave the room, but she was stopped by Sir Arthur.

“Miss Irvine,” he said, “I beg—I beg as a favour that you will remain. I am grieved indeed that you should be annoyed

by such a scene the very first day you pass under our roof. But you are Lady Cornish's friend; and as you have heard part, I wish you to hear all, that you may do me justice." Then turning to his wife he continued;—

"You have no excuse for your extraordinary conduct. You are completely your own mistress. I interfere with none of your pleasures or amusements. I do not attempt to control you in any way, even when you are so unreasonable as to refuse to call upon a lady of the most unexceptionable character, birth, manners, and station, for no other reason that you can give apparently than that I have requested it, and that she is a person for whom I have some regard. You have all that you wish in your establishment; you may have what company you please; you have abundance of money at your command; or if you wish for more you may have it by asking for it. My wish is that you should possess every comfort and luxury, and all I ask from you in return is common politeness."

"*All* you ask! yes, it is *all* you ask.

Too little by far to ask from your wife, as all that you have enumerated is too little to give if you withhold what alone would bestow value upon your gifts. Money!" she cried, with contempt and indignation, and with that peculiar haughty elevation of the head which Caroline had once or twice remarked in her, "I scorn and despise the base dross. Arthur, there is one thing in this world for which I would gladly exchange my wealth, my station, every comfort and luxury I possess, and gladly dwell in the poorest cottage on the Harbury estate, nay, beyond the pale of civilisation, in a Caffre hut, or an Indian wigwam."

Violet's voice softened as she spoke, and a tear even started to her eye. Her husband, however, did not change his countenance, which was haughty and stern, but continued to speak in the same tone, as if he had not heard her.

"At all events, if you will not behave to me with ordinary civility when we are alone,—if you insist on making our private intercourse so disagreeable that I am glad to limit it as much as possible, you need

not disgrace yourself and me by parading our domestic felicity before the whole world."

"The world! I scorn the world," cried Violet, with added bitterness, while tears of incontrollable anguish, in spite of her pride and her efforts to restrain them, forced themselves from her eyes; "and *I* at least will not stoop to make a vain show of that which has no reality; no! let us appear what we are."

"Do you refuse then, madam, to comply with common propriety?"

"If common propriety means falsehood."

Sir Arthur was now in a towering rage. His eyes flashed, he was very pale, and his lips trembled with passion.

"Don't insult me with such cant. Hitherto, madam, I have merely expressed my wishes, which in almost every instance you have refused to accede to. Now, I command you to alter your conduct, at least in public, and to treat me with that degree of deference which is your bounden duty, and I will be obeyed. Do you hear me, madam?"

Violet returned no answer.

“ I speak to you on this subject,” he continued, “ for the last time, and I offer you but one alternative—a final separation. Let me have your answer to-morrow morning.” He then turned, as if to leave the room, but stopped to say to Caroline—

“ Miss Irvine, you are a sensible woman, I am led to believe, from all that I know of you ; and you will, I trust, counsel your friend not to allow her ungovernable temper to blind her entirely to her own interest, and to everything that is rational and seemly.”

He had been gone for some minutes before either of the ladies spoke. Violet leant back in her chair with a countenance pallid and fixed, her lips firmly pressed together, and her whole expression indicative at once of suffering and a determination, not so much to overcome it, as to repress its outward signs. Caroline regarded her with a feeling of the deepest sadness. Accustomed all her life to the most perfect family union, this scene of domestic discord had astonished and shocked her. She felt the pause very awkward, yet she knew not how to break

it, or whether she ought to refer to the scene which had just passed. She was relieved, however, from this dilemma by Lady Cornish herself.

“A pleasant breakfast we have had, have we not, Caroline?” she said, with sarcastic bitterness.

Caroline looked grave; she hardly knew what to answer. Violet continued, “We have not often such storms as you have witnessed; but, upon the whole, they are more tolerable to me than that constant atmospheric gloom which is the only alternative. But I am sorry on your account, Caroline, as it must have made you very uncomfortable.”

“Do not think of me, Violet. I speak only the truth when I say my discomfort is solely on your account. For you I am grieved, indeed. And, since you have spoken on the subject, may I ask you what you intend to do with regard to the alternative Sir Arthur has proposed?”

Violet started, and grew paler still. “Do you think he was really in earnest, or was he only in a passion?”

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piece of ornamental furniture,—to be placed at the head of his dinner-table, or a useful machine to do the honours of his house. He gives me no confidence, no affection. He would not yield five minutes of his time, he would not sacrifice the lightest whim of the moment, to gratify my fondest wish. As long as I was a novelty to him,—ere my conversation, and music, and beauty had, from familiarity, become wearisome,—he was devoted to me, and, for one year, I was in Elysium. By degrees the change came. Had it come suddenly, it must have killed me at once. As it is, it is killing me slowly.” These last words were spoken without passion—in the low tone of perfect conviction. She then continued, with her ordinary composure: “It was long ere I could entirely believe it—ere I could bring myself to realize the horrible truth that he whom I worshipped with every power of my heart regarded me with utter indifference. At last I could doubt it no longer; and I saw, too, Caroline—yes, I saw that his love for me had been selfishness from the beginning,—that his whole nature was

utterly and entirely selfish. And then I remembered that you had long ago told me this,—that, babe as you were then in knowledge of the world, you had read too truly the heart of Arthur Cornish; and too late I repented my mad delusion,—too late I saw the truth. The words of your remonstrance, Caroline, on that fatal day at Ardenнан, when I set the seal to the misery of my life, have rung daily and nightly in my ears. No, truly the love of Arthur Cornish has never been my comfort in sorrow, my support in trial, and my strength in temptation. And I shall die, Caroline, and he will not even then cheer me by one fond word, or drop one regretful tear over the wife whose heart he broke, and who loved him to the last with idolatry. Caroline, I cannot treat Arthur with the cold, conventional politeness which is all he will receive from me. Let him cease to neglect me,—let him give me, as he once did when we were both happy, his leisure hours, his confidence, his love, and there is nothing in the power of woman to do or to suffer

that I would not do and suffer for him, and so think myself blessed beyond all creatures. But he, too, took a marriage vow, and, unless he gives me his love, he has no right to require my obedience!"

"No right to *require* it, certainly. Still, Violet, it is your duty to render it— as your vow was to God, and not to man. The marriage vow is no bargain on either side, but a solemn promise to God made on both parts, and quite unconditionally. Besides, dearest Violet, are you not more likely to win back your husband's affection by setting him a good example than by imitating his own culpable conduct? He called you exacting. Are you sure you are not so? Dearest Violet, my heart is very heavy for you;—I feel how you must have suffered, my poor friend. You say you love with idolatry. Oh! dear Violet, perhaps God has wrested your idol from you to draw your heart where it can meet with no disappointment. I am a vain, foolish girl myself often, and I speak to you from the experience of my

own wayward heart. Will you forgive me, Violet, for speaking so plainly, for the sake of the true affection I feel for you?"

"Forgive you!"—and poor Violet burst into tears; but her heart was softer. Caroline tried to seize the happy moment to whisper:—

"Perhaps—for nothing is quite impossible—you may, in the end, win him back; or, if you do not, you may win peace for yourself. You will not separate from your husband, my dearest Violet?"

"No, Caroline," she answered, in a low tone; "not at present."

Caroline, so far satisfied, then continued to speak in the warm, self-forgetting manner common to all whose words proceed from a full heart, and not from a feeling of superiority, or a desire to magnify themselves. And Caroline's heart was very full of a wish to comfort her friend, and to shed, if it might be, one ray of heavenly light into her passion-darkened mind. Violet listened to her with attention and gratitude; but Caroline feared that she had made no impression. At

last their conversation turned upon general topics, and Violet began to talk of a drive after luncheon, for the fog was now quite cleared away.

CHAPTER III.

Nothing was more surprising to Caroline than to see how quickly, after agitation so violent, Lady Cornish recovered her composure. Half an hour after the scenes detailed in the last chapter, no one unacquainted with her would have guessed, from her self-possessed manner, and the ease and even vivacity with which she spoke, that anything extraordinary had affected her. Caroline even was surprised; but she was not deceived. Beneath all her apparent self-possession, she discerned the wounded spirit; her cheerfulness she perceived was but superficial, nay, seemed in some degree to be produced by the excited condition of her mind. Caroline saw now too clearly why Violet's beauty was pre-

maturely faded, and what that was which had given to her face so anxious an expression. With all the world could give, wealth, station, talents, beauty, Lady Cornish had at her heart one ever-gnawing care. Her friend saw now why she could find interest only in violent excitements; all others were powerless to give her sensations, and thus banish her own for a short space from her mind. Caroline was now thoroughly confirmed in the opinion she had long ago entertained of the utter selfishness and cold-heartedness of Sir Arthur Cornish. Yet she could believe that Violet's conduct might have been the reverse of conciliatory. She could easily imagine that the latter might be exacting, sullen, and occasionally even violent. It was too clear that there existed on neither side the basis of sound religious principle,—the only basis on which happiness can endure. Arthur's love had been selfishness, Violet's idolatry, and the end had been such as might have been anticipated—indifference on the one side, and misery on the other.

Caroline Irvine silently prayed that God

would help her to bring comfort to the unhappy woman, who seemed to cling to her as her only friend. A new and dark chapter in human life seemed suddenly to have been opened to her. For the time it cast a cloud over her naturally happy spirit. She fell into a deep meditation upon the nature and passions of human beings, and the many dark, dangerous, desperate paths into which even our best impulses may lead us, when we are guided in our way by no light from a source higher than that of our own feelings.

“How grave and absent you are, Caroline!” cried Lady Cornish, at last. “Are you tired with your journey?”

“No, I am only thoughtful.”

“The worst thing you could be. I have ordered the carriage, and as the day is fine, I shall be guilty of the vulgarity of taking you to see some of the lions, as I know you are of an inquiring mind, and are interested in such things. But don’t tell Lady Harriet.”

“Sir Arthur’s mother?”

“Yes. And, by-the-bye, I wonder she has not been here before now. She told

me the other day that she intended to take the earliest opportunity of calling on you."

"Is she an agreeable person?"

"Most people think her so. You will hear constantly that Lady Harriet Cornish is a delightful woman. She is much more popular than Lady Cornish; only as Lady Cornish is the lady of the reigning baronet, and lives in a finer house, and gives finer entertainments, she is not without her votaries likewise; but upon the whole, Lady Harriet is the favourite. She is an intellectual woman too, or at least is considered so—a great patroness of literature and art."

"Indeed!" cried Caroline, "is she really very clever?"

"You shall judge for yourself, my dear. She is a sharp-witted woman, certainly, and very agreeable, and she always contrives to collect a good many stars at her conversaziones. She has really been of use once or twice, I believe, in helping to bring forward unknown genius. She is often good-natured enough when her own interest does not come in the way, and

when she remembers, or happens to be in the humour, or when her *protégés* are skilful toadies. You shall attend her parties, if you please."

As Lady Cornish spoke, Caroline's eyes brightened. She had always longed to mix in the society of literary people. There was nothing she had ever liked so much as to be in the company of those from whose conversation she could learn somewhat—not mere facts, or what is called useful information,—for that she could obtain as well from books, but she longed for that stimulus to the mind, that enlargement of the ideas, which nothing can so well bestow as an interchange of thoughts with those—a small proportion of mankind—who really *think*. Caroline, though she never resigned the empire of her own understanding, was somewhat of a hero-worshipper. She wondered how Violet could talk so calmly, and speak of literary society as if it were nothing at all superior to any other society.

"You and Lady Harriet are on very friendly terms, I suppose?"

“Very. As friendly as two people can be who do not care a straw for each other. We are and have always been on the most amiable terms. I could not desire a more polite, accommodating mother-in-law, and I endeavour to behave as prettily towards her. You look as if you thought me inconsistent, Caroline. When I am utterly indifferent to people, I feel no difficulty in being as polite and insincere as any other woman of fashion. But I am not woman of the world enough to constrain the natural feelings of my heart, so as to sham an indifference, and pretend a formal politeness, when every power of my soul is on the rack. Caroline, the wife of a man of the world should have *no heart*. There is no other way by which she can hope to escape misery.”

Caroline was preparing to answer, when a carriage stopped at the door, and a footman's knock announced the arrival of a visitor.

“It is Lady Harriet,” said Violet, recovering at once her composure. The next minute her ladyship was announced.

Lady Harriet Cornish could not have

been a woman under fifty-five years of age, but she looked several years younger. She was a well-preserved, regular-featured, smooth-skinned, somewhat portly dame, yet by no means overgrown. She was handsomely and fashionably dressed, but not so fashionably as to be in an extreme. Lady Harriet had too much tact and good taste for that. Neither was the style of her dress, though not quite that of an elderly person, absurdly juvenile. In features she bore some resemblance to her son, but hers were not so finely formed, and she had not the large, flashing eyes or aristocratic *tournure* which were among his most striking distinctions. Neither was her demeanour, when silent, marked by the same air of haughty repose which characterised his. She did not look proud; she did not look very intellectual, though there was nothing in her countenance to indicate any mental deficiency. She did not look anything so decidedly as worldly. She came into the room, saying,—

“My sweetest Violet, I am so glad you are at home. I feared that you might

have gone out with your friend, or that your friend might have been tired, and that you might have denied yourself. How do you do, my love?—you seem a little *accablée*. I fear you are not quite so strong as I could wish. Pray, introduce me to your friend. I am so desirous to make Miss Irvine's acquaintance."

Violet having complied with her request, she continued.

"I have heard so much of you, my dear Miss Irvine, from Arthur and Violet, that I almost imagine you are my friend also. I trust, however, that we shall lose no time in becoming friends, as I feel satisfied we shall suit each other. My dear Violet tells me you are an artist, and I shall have much pleasure in introducing you to many very clever artists. I am fond of intellectual society, and see a good deal at my house."

Lady Harriet was a great talker, and seldom waited for an answer, even when she professed herself very anxious for one. She now began to speak of Scotland.

"Can you believe it? my dear Miss Irvine, I have never been in Scotland,

though I have always had the most earnest desire to see your romantic and interesting country. But something has invariably come in the way just at the time I proposed going—so provoking, with the enthusiasm I have always had too for everything Scotch. Scott has been my favourite from my earliest childhood, and I dote on Burns—one of Carlyle's heroes you know."

Now Lady Harriet had once attempted to read Burns; but not being able to understand him, had given up the book in despair. On the strength of this attempt, she had however got up an enthusiasm for the inspired exciseman, which was displayed more especially for the benefit of her Scotch acquaintance. After she had sat for about a quarter of an hour, speaking nearly all the time herself, and generally insinuating something more or less flattering to what she conceived to be the opinions and feelings of her listeners, she rose to take leave, saying; "Now I must not detain you longer, as I am sure you are going out. Now, beloved Violet, do not over fatigue yourself. I am so wretchedly anxious about

you. I hope, my dear Miss Irvine, I shall see a great deal of you while you are in town. Monday is the evening on which I hold my *conversazioni*. I think I may give one night in the week to my literary friends, while I devote the rest to the duties of my station, and of keeping up my connection with the fashionable world. My love to Arthur. Lady Richwood congratulated me on his brilliant speech the other night. But I must go now. I always find it so difficult to tear myself away."

Owing to this visit, it was later in the day than they had intended when Lady Cornish and her friend set forth. After driving through some of the principal streets, they went to the Park, it being now the fashionable hour. It was a fine, sunshiny afternoon, and the scene—the verdant lawns with the freshness of early spring yet upon them, the noble trees, the broad glittering Serpentine, the splendid equipages, the well-mounted equestrians, the gay and moving crowd, and on the limits of the picture, the handsome mansions of the English aristocracy

—to the eye of a novice like Caroline Irvine, appeared of the most brilliant description. As she eagerly surveyed the novel pageant, Violet looked at her, at her fresh, intelligent countenance, so full of animation and interest, and as she looked she envied her.

“ Oh that I could feel thus ! ” thought this poor woman of the world. Yet to see her did Lady Cornish good, even while it saddened her. It was like a reminiscence of days so long past that they seemed almost to belong to a previous state of existence, the days when it had been a delight to go with her father to see a new greenhouse or an exhibition of paintings. Violet had not thought of those childish times with their innocent delights for many a long year. Now the idea brought before her so suddenly, how she could hardly tell, nearly made her weep. But there was at her heart a fresher feeling than had been there for many a day. It was like a slight sprinkling shower after a long and parching drought.

Caroline was yet occupied in the con-

temptation of the novelties around, when a gentleman on horseback rode up to the carriage and saluted them. It was Lady Cornish's brother, Captain——now Major Smythe.

"How do you do, Miss Irvine? I am delighted to see you in town. Dreadfully fatiguing kind of afternoon, don't you think? How do, Violet? I intend to have the pleasure of calling on Miss Irvine to-morrow, if this weather does not knock me up altogether. Going to Mrs. Ingram's to-morrow night?"

"I do not know. I may look in; but her parties are generally stupid. Will you dine with us on Thursday, George? We expect Lady Harriet." George made a wry face. Violet continued; "Sir Arthur is in the humour at present for respectable family parties. We are all to go to the Opera together in the evening."

"The Opera! I am glad to hear it, for I have looked in your box every night for the last month, and don't think I have seen you once, though Sir Arthur is often there."

"I am tired of the Opera;" Violet answered, uneasily. For a second, her brother looked at her with a sort of inquiring, melancholy interest, as if he did not quite believe her, for she was passionately fond of operatic music, even to an unfashionable excess. The truth was, that the Opera was fraught with too many associations of a happiness entirely past away for Lady Cornish to be able to endure with equanimity the pain of being there, and of contrasting present with past feelings. This glance raised George Smythe higher in Caroline's estimation than anything she had ever seen in him before. It showed her that despite his indolence and affectation, he was not only intelligent but possessed some kindness of heart. He rode away, saying with wonderful energy for him; "I shall not fail you at dinner, in spite of Lady Harriet."

"You saw a good deal of George in Edinburgh, I believe, Caroline?" said Lady Cornish.

"Yes," she replied, "I frequently met him at parties; but one does not in one

sense see very much of any one in that way—at least what one sees is merely superficial.”

“Some never see beyond what is superficial, or see it too late,” Lady Cornish answered; “but George told me he had seen a great deal of you, and that he thought very highly of my taste in friendship. George is indolent, and affects, I think, to be more indolent than he is; but he has a great deal of good feeling, and is by no means deficient in ability. I have often thought that if George had a sufficient motive, he might become a very different person. Once or twice I have seen him really roused by some strong interest, and then his whole nature seemed changed. George has thrown himself away; but even late in the day as it is, I do not yet quite despair, if he could only find a motive for exertion or some one to spur him on and rouse his latent ambition and energy; for that he possesses both I am almost certain.”

“And why, dearest Violet, can you yourself not be this person?” cried Caro-

line, hoping that she might at last have found something to divert her unhappy friend from brooding over her own griefs and anxieties.

“ I, dear Caroline ? Nay, he must seek some other than I. I have not so much influence, and I am too much occupied by my own cares. Besides, the person who must do this for George must possess a fund of energy and perseverance,—must be able to set an example of what he teaches,—must possess all that moral persistency, that lofty devotion to principle in which poor impassioned I am so deficient ; for, my long adherence to my determination was, I fear, only pride and resentment, not firmness.”

They had now driven once or twice round the inner circle. Lady Cornish had bowed to many of her acquaintance, and had spoken to a few, and she now proposed that they should return home to dinner.

“ I hope you have been amused with your drive, Caroline ? ”

“ Much, to-day ; but it seems to me that it would be very tiresome to come

here every day, and drive at this same slow rate, in this same crowd. It must become very monotonous in time."

Lady Cornish laughed. "More monotonous, than the drive from Locharroch to Ardennan?"

"Oh! far more. That was never monotonous. It looked different every time I saw it. Sometimes the hills were so clear and sharp, at other times they were so beautifully veiled by the mists. I do so love that beautiful highland country; it makes me quite enthusiastic when I begin to speak about it."

"Malcolm Gordon used to tell me you were a poet, and I think he was right. You said he was coming home soon, I think?"

"In the end of next month," replied Caroline, her heart beginning to beat as she thought of how soon she was to see him again.

Violet did not continue this topic; but after a short pause, she inquired, "Should you like to live in London? that is, to have London principally for your home?"

“ I know so little of it that it is almost impossible I can answer you ; but I rather think I should prefer the country, or even Edinburgh, which possesses many of the advantages of a country residence. Even the little I have seen of London to-day has given me such a feeling of its being impossible to get out of it to the trees and the green fields, that I cannot fancy I could be happy shut up in such a wilderness of streets.”

“ But the society, Caroline ; in London one can choose one’s own society, and whatever may be one’s taste, one can always find a circle to sympathize in it. In the country one has no choice. One must take such society as one finds, or do without.”

“ I shall be better able to answer you when I have been at Lady Harriet’s. Intellectual society must be a great advantage ; still, dearest Violet, if I had a happy home, and intellectual and amiable society at my own fireside, I should be content to do without it elsewhere.”

The instant after she had spoken, Caroline was sorry for what she had said ;

for at the mention of "a happy home," a shadow passed over Lady Cornish's face. It vanished, however, immediately ; and she said, cheerfully, " But if a happy home might be found in London, as well as in the country, could you resign yourself to becoming a denizen of this wilderness of streets, as you call it ?"

" Yes," cried Caroline ; " certainly I could. I could be happy, I think, anywhere that it pleased God to cast my lot, had I only a happy home."

Lady Cornish said nothing more ; but leaned back in the carriage, as if satisfied with the answer she had received.

CHAPTER IV.

THE domestic storm was hushed for the present. Lady Cornish now treated her husband, if not with that easy politeness he showed to her, at least with a sort of stiff civility. Occasionally in her air and tone Caroline perceived slight indications of a renewal of hostilities; but generally she suppressed all open manifestation of her feelings. Sir Arthur, meanwhile perceiving that he had gained his point, wisely forbore referring to the subject of their quarrel. In this state of affairs, the family dinner went off with admirable propriety. Sir Arthur was in one of his most agreeable moods, spoke well on most of the topics of the day, and entered into a long discussion with Major Smythe and

Caroline, on varieties of character, and the manner in which persons are apt to deceive themselves with regard to their own. To have heard Sir Arthur speak, one would have fancied him not only a clever man, but a good one; yet all this time Caroline knew that he was torturing his wife by his selfish indifference, and every minute provoking her temper by his hollow politeness. With all his agreeableness and attention to herself—attention, however, which was merely superficial, for he did not forego one single wish of his own, or sacrifice one single hour to her society—she disliked him more and more. He appeared to her a very incarnation of selfishness.

George Smythe, on the contrary, she really began to like. He seemed, in spite of the pretended indifference of tone in which he sometimes spoke of her, to be really much attached to his sister, and to have some suspicion that she was not happy. Occasionally, there was a sort of involuntary tenderness in his manner towards her which seemed to indicate some such notion. Caroline fancied, too,

that he suspected Sir Arthur of being the cause ; for though the brothers-in-law seemed perfectly amicable, there was evidently no real cordiality between them, and no companionship. Yet this might have been Sir Arthur's fault ; for though, according to his system of conventional propriety, he made a point of paying all due attention to his wife's brother, it was only consistent with his character to suppose that he despised him for his plebeian birth. To Caroline, Major Smythe was invariably friendly. In her company he was often animated, and rarely if ever indulged in his indolent moods. Lady Cornish said she had infected him with her liveliness and activity, and he did not deny the assertion. He was now constantly at his sister's, chatting, and sometimes reading to the ladies in the morning. Frequently, also, he accompanied them in their drive, or escorted them to the various public places, of which they were now going the round, by way of showing Caroline the lions. They also frequently met him at evening parties ; of which they attended a great many, of every descrip-

tion. Caroline, although naturally fond of society, was soon heartily tired of this perpetual whirl of gaiety. To Violet, on the contrary, habit seemed to have rendered it necessary,—although even she appeared to find no real enjoyment in it. Caroline had not been able to attend Lady Harriet's first literary party after her arrival, on account of Lady Cornish being laid up with a bad sick headach. But it was decided they should go to the second. George Smythe had volunteered to accompany them, much to his sister's surprise; for he generally abjured Lady Harriet and her parties of every kind and description, whenever he possibly could.

The greater part of the company had already arrived at Lady Harriet's, when Lady Cornish, her brother, and Caroline were shown into her brilliantly lighted, excessively crowded rooms. Lady Harriet was moving about from person to person, saying something flattering and appropriate to each. She welcomed her daughter-in-law with great fervour. "I am so delighted to see you, my dearest Violet, and your young friend. I have

just been speculating all day whether or not you would come. Major Smythe, so very kind of you to come. I thought of sending you a special invitation, as your sister and Miss Irvine were to be here ; but I felt sure that dear Violet would bring you, if you were disengaged ; and, to my house, her invitations are the same as my own." Not one of the persons to whom this speech was addressed believed a single word of it ; but they all bowed as if they did most thoroughly. And the polite farce being concluded, Lady Harriet passed on to welcome the next arrival.

Caroline began to survey the scene. The guests present were upon the whole intelligent and pleasant-looking ; and there were a few whose countenances were so attractive, that Caroline would have given much to be able to converse with them. The assemblage was altogether quite different from any she had yet seen in London. There was less uniformity, less fashion, less stiffness. Individual character seemed less under the influence of conventional restrictions. Persons did not seem to think it so absolutely neces-

sary all to look, move, think, and speak in precisely the same manner; for in fashionable society, as every one knows, the grand point is to be as little like yourself, and as much like every one else (only finer) as possible. Here people did not seem so very much ashamed of having feelings and opinions of their own, or of expressing their natural emotions.

But although Lady Harriet had declared herself exceedingly anxious to introduce Miss Irvine to some of her literary friends, and had altogether expressed herself in such terms, that one would have imagined it was the wish nearest to her heart, she seemed now to have forgotten all about it, and to be entirely occupied with the labour of being universally delightful.

Lady Cornish, meanwhile, had been seized upon by some acquaintance, so that Caroline was left with George Smythe near the door. As the crowd was so great that it was not easy to penetrate into the room, they sat down where they were, on a seat which chanced to be vacant; and the latter, throwing off his languor, exerted himself to be agreeable. Caroline had

discovered, some years before, that George Smythe was possessed of an understanding, she now began to discover that he had also a heart. Much as they had been thrown together for the last week or two, they had never been so entirely alone as they were now in this crowded room. Neither of them knew, or were known by, anybody present, and thus a bond of union seemed to have been created between them. They fell by degrees into an animated and interesting conversation. Never had Caroline seen Major Smythe so entirely devoid of all airs of indolence and indifference, or so little anxious to exhibit his white hand or his magnificent brilliant. At last he said, but without the least appearance of fishing for a compliment,—

“I am sure you must find this party a very stupid business. Let me find Lady Harriet, and ask her to introduce you to some of those people you wish to know?”

“Thank you; but she seems very much engaged, at present, complimenting that young lady who has been playing and singing.”

Major Smythe laughed.

"Lady Harriet is always complimenting somebody. She is a delightful woman. The worst of it is, her benevolence takes so wide a range, that she must always neglect somebody to please some one else. There is nothing more amusing to me than to observe the nicely graduated scale of Lady Harriet's civilities. If there was no one present but you and I, Lady Harriet would be so devoted to us that you would suppose we were her dearest friends. Let a more important person enter the room, we must hide our diminished heads immediately, while the new-comer would, in like manner, be supplanted by a greater man than he. In short, Lady Harriet furnishes a living example of the *beau-ideal* of a woman of the world—selfish, heartless, and good-tempered. There are many of her tribe, but she is the most perfect specimen I ever knew. But I am forgetting myself; she seems to be less occupied."

"No," said Caroline; "though I must confess I am disappointed by this result of Lady Harriet's fine promises, I feel

there is something too formidable, if not altogether impracticable, in the idea of breaking into the midst of that great circle and being formally presented and set down to be talked to by some celebrity. Lady Harriet might, perhaps, have managed differently had she remembered in time the expectations she led me to form, or had she not been so much occupied by other cares. Rather explain to me, if you can, why Lady Harriet being so very worldly a woman, she should care so much for intellectual society? I should have imagined, from her rank and position, that she might have mixed in society more congenial to her tastes and more gratifying to her vanity."

"I shall explain the riddle to the best of my power. The great objects of Lady Harriet's life are amusement and worldly success. In the great fashionable world, at least since Sir George's death, she has not been a great person, for her jointure is not very large,—her beauty has long been on the wane, or rather has set entirely,—she has no country-house to which summer invitations might be desirable;

and, in short, her acquaintance, though perfectly unexceptionable, can confer neither lustre nor profit on the society to which she naturally belongs. She, therefore, hit upon the plan of setting up for a blue, and a patroness of literature, art, and science,—and being an acute sort of woman, and managing to collect around her the stars of the intellectual firmament, she has succeeded pretty well. Her *conversazioni* are very agreeable to those who belong to the set. I only wish you could have been properly introduced, and not left to pass your evening at the door in this stupid way.”

“How very melancholy it is,” cried Caroline, whose thoughts were still occupied by the account he had just given of Lady Harriet, “to think that there are people in the world whose sole dependence for the attention of their fellow-creatures is on the interested motives they may be able to create. How dreadfully desolate to be loved by no one!”

As Caroline finished speaking, she caught George Smythe’s eyes fixed upon her with peculiar admiration.

"It *is* melancholy," he said, "and melancholy to think how one can ever be insensible to how melancholy it is. I trust I shall never be so again. Miss Irvine, you teach me both how to think and feel."

"I—!" cried Caroline, in amazement, "I thought I had been guilty of a truism."

"Perhaps it was a truism; but it became like some new truth by your way of saying it. You spoke it from the fulness of your heart, and I felt it in mine. But Violet is moving, I am sorry to see, as it is the signal that one of the most agreeable evenings in my life is at an end."

As Major Smythe spoke, he offered his arm to Caroline to conduct her to Lady Harriet, who was in the adjoining room. As they passed through the folding doors, Caroline heard some one ask who they were.

"Lady Cornish's brother and a young lady from Scotland. They say they are engaged."

"Ah! a very nice-looking couple."

Caroline felt herself colour all over. She hoped George Smythe did not hear;

but she feared he did, for he looked a little conscious, and did not speak again till they were in the carriage, and then it was in answer to a question from Lady Cornish, addressed to Caroline as well as to him.

“ Have you had a very dull evening ? ”

“ I have not. I have felt it delightful. I fear, however, Miss Irvine is disappointed in not having been introduced to some of the artists and authors. Why did you not manage better, Violet ? ”

Lady Cornish did not reply. The truth was, she had reasons she did not choose to disclose. For the first time for years she had an interest in life apart from herself.

All the way home, Caroline was unusually silent and thoughtful. A new idea had sprung up in her mind ; but she hoped she was mistaken, and almost thought she was very silly to have permitted it to enter her imagination.

The morning after this party at Lady Harriet's, Sir Arthur entered the room where his wife and Caroline were sitting, and, addressing the former, said with

studied politeness, yet pointedly, " I shall feel obliged, Lady Cornish, by your calling on Mrs. Herbert Cayley to-day, and sending her an invitation to the ball you propose giving in the end of May."

Violet returned no answer. For a minute, indeed, as Caroline caught a glimpse of her friend's rigid countenance, she feared another quarrel; but this time Violet conquered herself. It had been a severe, though brief struggle, between jealousy on the one hand, and a dread on the other of Sir Arthur's fulfilling his threat of a separation, and after all, this alternative appeared to Lady Cornish a calamity beyond all others. This unhappy woman was continually distracted between the two passions of love and resentment. While the latter led her at one moment to thwart his wishes, and almost to desire to be rid of him for ever, the other ever drew her near to him as by some strange fascination, and made her feel that even the restless fever of misery in which she now lived, was preferable to the dull, hopeless anguish of a separation. That very afternoon, Lady Cornish drove

to Mrs. Herbert Cayley's, and left a card. The same evening, she sent her an invitation to the ball. All day, Violet had been unusually silent ; but as soon as the note was gone, she exclaimed, as if partially relieved, " That is over at any rate, —and O that the ball were over too ! Words cannot express how I detest that woman. Now, Caroline, you need not tell me that it is wrong to detest any one, because I know it already ; but I am not, can never be, good, so I must detest her. I detest her beauty, I detest her cunning, I detest the way in which she contrives to fascinate Arthur."

" Dearest Violet, are you quite certain you are not unreasonably jealous ?"

" I am certain the woman is such as I describe her. She is a desperate flirt, and is never happy but when she is enticing away from its lawful allegiance the heart of some other woman's lover or husband. She is one of those women who are silent and disagreeable to their own sex (although she *can* be otherwise when it suits her views), and reserve all their conversation and the whole artillery of their

charms and flattery for the other. Could I condescend to be such as she is, I believe even I could captivate the errant affections of Sir Arthur Cornish; but, Caroline, I could not be what she is. I could not force my tongue to lie, even for the love of my own husband."

Caroline looked earnestly and sadly at her friend, and once more began to try to infuse into her poor, stricken, rebellious heart, better and calmer feelings, while she sought to comfort her with the one great consolation, open to all those who will humble their haughty spirits to receive it. But Caroline was not so sanguine now of the power of truth as she used to be. It seemed to her that nothing she said made the least impression upon Lady Cornish.

In reply to her harangue, so eloquent at least in feeling, the latter merely said, "Thank you, my good, kind Caroline; but I know all that. I know if I were what you wish me to be, I should be better, wiser, happier; but the day has gone by long ago when it was possible for me to become anything but what I am.

Do not look so disappointed, my darling Carry. I cannot bear to see such an expression as that in your kind, sunny face, and reflect that it has been brought there by poor worthless me."

It was now near the middle of May—within a fortnight of the night of Lady Cornish's ball, and the time of the expected return of Malcolm Gordon. Caroline lived at present in such a whirl of engagements that she found it difficult to realise that she was actually to see him so soon, while she had hardly time to ponder much upon what, in her quiet Edinburgh home, she knew would have excited her in no small degree. Occasionally, when Lady Cornish had driven out alone, or when she was occupied in writing notes—the only occupation she ever seemed to have—it was a luxury to Caroline to withdraw to her own room, and lying down on the sofa, rest her mind by thinking of home, of past days, of Wallacefield, of Locharroch, of Malcolm, of her girlish love, and her woman's friendship for this hero of her youthful fancy. And in those moments when she had time to feel that she should

so shortly see him again, she experienced a sort of agitated longing, and she thought how she should like to leave this gay, glittering, magnificent London, and be walking with him once more by the lonely highland loch, and talking as they used to talk long ago. How pleasant the life at Locharroch seemed in comparison with that she was now leading! How vapid, vain, and profitless seemed this perpetual round of gaiety! Doubtless, the most refined and intellectual society in the world was to be met with in London, and Caroline felt that though she really could enjoy that, yet to her feelings the balance was in favour of the country. She felt that though a few weeks in the year spent in London could hardly fail to be beneficial in keeping the mind open, and free from the narrow prejudices and small views which are the bane of country society, upon the whole, country life was more favourable to depth and calmness of thought, to kindly social feelings, and to the quiet happiness of domestic life.

“It would require a very strong temptation,” she thought one day, when in-

dulging in her favourite lounge, "to induce me to consent to live always in London." The idea was yet in her mind, when some one knocked at the door of her room. It was one of the maid-servants.

"Please, Miss," said the woman, "Henry desired me tell you that Major Smythe is in the drawing-room, and my lady has gone out."

Caroline would much rather have been left to pursue her meditations in quietness. As she liked Major Smythe, however, she got up with a tolerably good grace, and ran down to the drawing-room, determined to make the best of it.

"Lady Cornish is out," she said, when they had shaken hands.

"I am aware of it," he replied. "I met her on my way here.—But," he added, after a short pause, "my visit was not intended for Violet, but for you. I was glad to hear she had gone out, as I wished to see you alone." As George Smythe spoke, he looked confused yet eager. His apathy and languor seemed quite to have forsaken him.

Caroline began to feel embarrassed. She trembled and hardly knew where to look. There was a very awkward pause, which was at last broken by Major Smythe.

“Miss Irvine,” he said, with sudden resolution, but colouring violently, “I wished to tell you this morning what I think you must have already seen—that I love you. I wished to ask you to become my wife, and to help me to elevate my life above the idle follies which have hitherto occupied it. Caroline, I shall become something better and more dignified for your dear sake; I will strive to make you happy, if you will only consent to be mine. Will you, dearest Caroline?” As George Smythe spoke, he took her hand, and would have raised it to his lips, but Caroline drew back.

“Stop!” she cried, “Major Smythe, and allow me to arrange my thoughts, for you have taken me by surprise. I do not deny that once,—but only once, and that only a few nights ago,—a suspicion did cross my mind that you had more than the regard of a common acquaintance for

me, but I thought that after all I might only have imagined it. I have never thought of you, except as the brother of my friend; and though I like you, I do not love you. I feel flattered by your good opinion—and I am very, very sorry that I should be the cause of disappointment or pain to you in any way, but I fear we are not suited to each other. I am very sorry, indeed;" reiterated Caroline, as she drew away her hand, with a serious, distressed face, but an air of decision.

Meanwhile, George Smythe's countenance had assumed an expression of surprise and disappointment. He answered: "But you like me, Miss Irvine, you say, and you have not thought of me as your lover. Think of me as such now, dearest Caroline, and do not reject me. Why should we not be happy together?" As he spoke, he would again have taken her hand, but again she drew back.

"I do not love you, Major Smythe; how then can I accept you?"

"But you may love me, Caroline, if you will only try. Try only, and I am content to wait till you do."

“ But perhaps I never may—I dare not bid you continue constant to me on the chance.”

“ But whether you try or not, Caroline, I am determined to continue constant to you. I have admired and flirted with many women, but you are the first I have ever loved—the only one I have ever wished to marry; and I am resolved to persevere till I win you. Listen to me, Miss Irvine:—hitherto I have wasted my life—I have frittered away my time and my abilities—and all this because I have had no object for exertion. All my life I have been the victim of a species of remorse on this account, which yet has never been sufficiently strong to overcome my natural, or, perhaps I should say, *habitual* indolence. Such a motive I have now found in you. You have completely roused me from my torpor; not only because I love you, and feel the ardour natural to a lover, but because your warm heart, your healthy energetic mind, supply exactly the stimulus required by my own character. With you for my wife, I should be an altogether different person. You say we are not suited—

I feel in you, on the contrary, the necessary complement of my being—my best and only hope of true happiness; and I am resolved to win you.”

As George Smythe spoke, he looked as Lady Cornish sometimes looked. There was something in the energy and firmness of his tone, and in the determination of his manner, which almost made Caroline feel as if she should be forced to become his wife against her own will. She answered hurriedly, and colouring with displeasure: “That depends upon my own will, Major Smythe, not upon yours; and I am as determined as you can be, not to marry a man I do not love.”

“No, Caroline—nor should I like to have a wife who did not love me; but you will love me in time. Forgive me if I spake but now so as to offend you. I ought to have said I was resolved to win your love. Surely there is nothing so hateful about me that I cannot hope to be loved.”

“No, certainly. Many women might love you, though I cannot.”

“But if many women might, why might not you also? I can assure you, I am not

by any means a very conceited fellow; and yet, upon my word, I think many more unlikely men have been loved by girls as superior to them, in point of character, as I acknowledge you are to me. To speak plainly—and you, I am sure, will not think the less of me for doing so—it would be at least an equal match for you in the eye of the world. We are suitable in age and station, and I have abundance of fortune for both. Surely it is desirable that you should marry. I do not speak of any advantages I may have it in my power to offer you, with the idea that I have any merit in them, or that I am conferring anything upon you. The advantages I should derive from such an union would, I am well aware, immensely counterbalance any I could offer.”

Caroline had now recovered her self-possession. She answered, calmly and simply, “How can it be desirable that I should marry where I cannot love? Marriage, Major Smythe, is not a transaction in which one ought to sit down to reckon the advantages and disadvantages. It is a connection in which it is pre-eminently

more blessed to give than to receive, and where affection is all."

As Caroline spoke, George Smythe regarded admiringly her frank, noble countenance. "Whatever you say or do, makes you seem more good, and beautiful, and charming—makes me only feel the more how fervently I love you. Oh, Caroline! my life has been passed without love; and now it seems so vapid, so useless. Such a life I can lead no longer. Save me from it, Caroline. Dear, brave heart, take compassion on me, and save me from this worst desolation."

Major Smythe's manner again was changed. The resolution, almost assurance, of his tone, was gone. His voice was slightly tremulous, his eyes were full of softness and entreaty; and there was a gentle sadness in his manner, which was almost fascinating. Caroline was melted: she felt that she was beginning to yield, when suddenly, produced by what association she could not tell, she thought of Malcolm Gordon. Had she never known him, she would, most probably, have married George Smythe; but having once

known the former, she could never think the latter his equal; and she could not marry one man, and feel, as she did, that she thought more highly of another. Major Smythe continued :

“ I shall be constant to you, at least—you cannot prevent me loving you, and, till you are married to another, I shall not cease trying to win you, unless”—and here his countenance became suddenly troubled—“ unless you already love some one else. Do you ?”

Caroline blushed deeply. For a moment she hesitated how to answer. He started from his chair, becoming deadly pale.

“ It is enough,” he said ; “ your secret is safe with me.”

“ Nay,” she cried hurriedly, “ I have no secret.”

“ I am quite aware, Miss Irvine, that I have no right to surprise your confidence ; but pray do not think it necessary to dissemble,”—he added, in a tone of displeasure,—“ it is unworthy of you.”

“ I do not dissemble,” she answered with some indignation ; and then continued more gently, and colouring violently, “ at least, if I have a secret, it belongs to the

past. I will tell you the whole truth, Major Smythe. Though it is not quite what you suppose, it must, I think, equally convince you, that to love me would be to throw away your affections; and I feel assured you will not prove unworthy of my confidence. I have loved; but I believe I have overcome the feeling. My heart is free from all disturbing influences; but I do not, and I think I never can, love you as I once loved the person to whom I refer. I hope this will convince you that it will be madness to persevere in loving me;" she added kindly.

"No, Caroline," he answered, his countenance brightening as he spoke; "it convinces me of the contrary. You say you love this other man, whoever he may be, no longer. The time must come when such a heart as yours will love again; and I shall watch for its coming, and try to hasten it. I am almost comforted, to think that the obstacle I have to contend with is but the ashes of a dead love, and not the flame of a living one, or even the icy coldness of perfect indifference. Dear, dearest Caroline! I ask nothing from you at present but to be allowed to love you, and to

be with you. I ask no promise of any kind. Caroline, you know what it is to love. For the sake of the love you have once felt, deny me not this. Speak kindly to me; and if I should be disappointed at last, my disappointment be upon my own head."

Caroline hesitated. "I wish I knew what was right to do," she answered; for her heart was again softening. She feared to be led by her compassionate weakness into a marriage, of which her judgment did not approve. She feared that at last he might persuade her to marry him. Altogether she was in a state of perplexity, and longed to be alone, that she might have time to disentangle her feelings, which she could now scarcely comprehend, and arrange her ideas on the momentous subject.

He saw that she was softened, and he continued: "You cannot prevent my loving you, Caroline; and as long as you are single I shall make no effort to overcome my love for you: I could not, believe me, if I would. Do not, then, deny me the delight of your society."

"I cannot prevent you visiting at

your sister's house, Major Smythe, nor have I any wish to do so, provided it is clearly understood, that we meet only as friends. After what I have said, it is for you, not for me to judge, how far it is prudent that we should meet."

"Thanks, a thousand times thanks, even for this," he answered, rising to take leave, with a respectful devotion mingled with a touch of sadness, which, for the moment, made Caroline's heart reproach her with unkindness. She knew so well what it was to love in vain.

As soon as he was gone, she again withdrew to the sofa in her own room. Her mind was in a whirl; she was certainly not quite decided to reject George Smythe. He was kind-hearted, amiable, and possessed abilities at least equal to the average. He had no bad habit, save that of excessive indolence, and Caroline felt that that must have been naturally a well-disposed mind to which idleness, and the many temptations it opens, more especially to a man of large fortune, had been attended with no worse consequences. Might he not have spoken the truth when he said that, through her, he might

yet become a different, more useful, and more dignified character? and was she right in declining to aid in the restoration of a useful member to society? Her father and family would be pleased, and Violet would be delighted. In opposition to all these arguments in favour of a union with Major Smythe, she had only to place the simple fact that she did not love him. But, as he had entreated her to do, might she not try? There was assuredly nothing unloveable in George Smythe,—nothing, except that he was not like Malcolm Gordon. What ought she to do?

As soon as George Smythe had left Caroline, he set off to wander alone in Kensington-gardens, which were then in a state of solitude, as it was not the fashionable time. Two or three months ago, George Smythe would not for the world have been there at such a time, but now the fashionable world, with all its follies, had become intolerable to him. Life, interest he found alone in the society of Caroline. He wondered how he could ever have endured his previous lonely existence. Had Caroline wished to

rivet more firmly the chain by which she held him, she could not have adopted a more certain course than that she was now unconsciously pursuing. Opposition always acted as a powerful stimulus upon the languid will of this young man. In the present case, also, uncertainty was so nicely tempered by hope, that his mind was placed in the most favourable attitude for exertion. Nor was it for a charming wife alone that George Smythe felt himself to be striving. He had an inward consciousness that his character must derive its active energy from some outward impulse. He did not possess within himself sufficient *moral momentum*. Sometimes in his more serious moods, he wished that he had been obliged by circumstances to follow a profession; then he should have exerted himself, and in consequence have been a happier man. Now it seemed to him, that in Caroline,—in her sound, active mind, and warm heart lay his only hope. Though selfish, certainly, in some respects, the love of George Smythe was of a quality superior to that felt by the mass of men. It had in it something at least of that “*willing*

sense of the insufficiency of the *self* for itself, which predisposes a generous nature to see, in the total being of another, the supplement and completion of its own," which Coleridge beautifully describes as an essential part of true love. He also truly desired to make Caroline happy, and of this he did not despair; for while he fully recognised her peculiar superiorities of character, he had a tolerably good opinion of himself. Many women had fallen in love with him; and it would be strange, indeed, if he could not gain the heart of the only woman for whom he had ever felt a real affection. Her indifference must have been produced merely by the effects of her former attachment. Of that, she said, she was already cured, and he would teach her at last, by the most assiduous devotion, to love him. He must and would marry Caroline Irvine.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN Caroline, at last, went downstairs, she found Lady Cornish alone in the drawing-room. As soon as she entered the apartment, the latter flew to meet her, and embracing her in her most vehement manner, cried, "Oh, dearest Caroline! I have been longing to see you. I feared to intrude, or I should have come to your own room. I met George on his way here; I guessed on what errand. Beloved friend, will you fulfil the dearest wish of my heart, with one hopeless exception?—will you be my sister? it is almost the only thing I hope for." And Violet looked eagerly and anxiously at her friend as she spoke.

Again Caroline found it difficult to resist the first impulse of her heart, which

urged her to say, "I will be your sister, my dear Violet; you shall have all the happiness I can give." She restrained herself, however, and merely replied by an embrace.

There was something in her manner which alarmed Lady Cornish.

"Speak to me, Caroline!" she cried, while her countenance fell. "You have not rejected him?"

"I shall tell you all, my dear friend; but sit down and be composed."

Lady Cornish complied, and Caroline gave her a detailed account of what had passed between her brother and herself. She even told her that she had once had another attachment, for it seemed to her that she could not avoid it; and she knew her secret was safe with Violet.

At this part of her confidence the latter seemed much surprised.

"You have loved, you say, Caroline. I never suspected it, my poor child. Is it lately?"

"No; long, long ago."

"We have been so long parted, Carry. Had I been with you, doubtless I should have discovered it."

"I do not think you would."

"I am sure I should."

"Nay, Violet, you did not!" cried Caroline, thrown off her guard for the moment.

"I did not!" exclaimed Violet, in a tone of astonishment. "Is it possible? but," she added, suddenly checking herself, "I do not wish to entrap your confidence."

"It is past,—all its pain, at least, long ago," Caroline said, colouring deeply.

Lady Cornish drew her towards her, and embraced her tenderly.

"Ah, Carry!" she said; "how good you are! You make me ashamed of myself; you make me—but it is too late now. I can never be other than the unhappy being I am. Caroline, I cannot express to you how I dread that ball, or how I detest the idea of receiving that odious woman. But I shall not pain you by saying more on the subject at present."

As Lady Cornish finished speaking, she took up a book and began to read.

Caroline remained in thought. She wondered if Violet had penetrated her secret.

At last the latter looked up from her book ; “ I cannot read,” she said. “ Caroline, I wish you could marry George. You do not know how near the wish is to my heart ; and what you say makes me fear that it will never be accomplished. I am doomed to disappointment in everything. Pardon me for complaining thus bitterly, but I have seen,—yes, this very day I have seen Arthur in the park with Mrs. Herbert Cayley. He was riding by her carriage, and they were in earnest conversation. She had the audacity to bow to me as I passed. Arthur bowed, too, in his politest, coldest manner. He looked as if he were braving me, and *she* looked so triumphant. Oh ! I was miserable ! I felt a strange sensation at my heart. For a minute I thought I was dying. Caroline, I have felt this sensation frequently lately, more especially when anything has happened more than usually to discompose me ; and one day I was obliged to lie down for a long time, I felt so violent a pain in my chest, while it seemed as if my heart would stop beating. My opinion is,” and Lady Cornish’s tone became low and solemn,

though it continued perfectly firm, "that I have got a disease of the heart, and that at no distant day I shall die."

"Dear, dear Violet! you are agitated and nervous only, I trust," Caroline replied, yet with great alarm,—for not only the symptoms Violet described, but the extreme sallowness of her complexion, and the anxious expression of her features, seemed to furnish evidence in corroboration of her apprehensions.

Caroline looked anxiously at her friend. Violet's face meanwhile continued unmoved, except that it seemed to become several degrees paler, if, indeed, that were possible.

"You ought to consult a medical man," said Caroline.

"No!" Violet answered, with decision; "the origin of my malady is far beyond the reach of doctors. I hardly know whether I wish, or dread to die; but I am resolved to meet my fate with resolution. I see, Caroline, by your face,—which is the most tell-tale face in existence,—that you are going to say something to me about religion. It is useless. You can say nothing I do not know, nothing that

I have not lost the power to feel, nothing that if I could feel, would not make me more miserable."

Violet had begun this last part of her speech with a sort of melancholy playfulness: she finished it with emphatic sternness, and immediately quitted the room. Caroline remained behind, quite unable to arrange the painful, harassing, and confused ideas which the events of the last few hours had awakened in her mind. She longed now to be at home—she longed for the mental repose afforded by her own quiet occupations—for the calm society of her domestic circle. Yet she could not leave Lady Cornish immediately, and less now than ever. Could Violet, indeed, be dying? As she thought of the bare possibility, Caroline could not refrain from shedding tears. Her heart was filled with sadness.

George Smythe still continued a daily visitor at his sister's. He accompanied the ladies everywhere, and it was currently reported that he was engaged to Miss Irvine—a report which he never contradicted, and which Caroline never heard. He conducted himself, however, on all

occasions, with the greatest tact and delicacy, for while his manner was devoted, it was perfectly inobtrusive. It seemed to say; "I love you as much as ever, but I will not torment you with attentions which may be disagreeable." Nothing could have been more likely to gain on Caroline than such a style of behaviour. Day by day she felt that George Smythe's society was becoming more agreeable and more necessary to her. The spell of propinquity had begun to work. Still she had not yet given him any encouragement save that implied in the fact of permitting him a large share of her society,—and, under their peculiar circumstances, that, perhaps, was no encouragement at all.

A few nights before that of Lady Cornish's ball, and just as Caroline was stepping into the carriage to accompany Violet and her brother to the Opera, a letter arrived for her by post. It bore the Southampton postmark, and the address was in a well-known hand. He was in Britain, then, once more! Her fingers trembled as she opened the letter, her face coloured all over, and her eyes

sparkled with pleasure. "Malcolm is in England!" she cried,—“he will be in London to-morrow!” Then remarking that Violet looked a little disturbed, and put her hand to her heart, she suddenly stopped.

“You seem much delighted at the prospect of seeing your cousin?” George said, in a somewhat disconcerted tone.

“He is not my cousin—only my sister-in-law’s brother, but the same to me as if he were my own brother.”

George Smythe answered nothing; but his countenance for a few minutes looked a little disturbed. It passed off, however, almost immediately. He was not of a very jealous disposition, having too much confidence in himself, and too genial a temper to be a proper subject for this passion. Moreover, he thought, on reflection, that it was unlikely that Caroline was attached to a man for whom she professed so openly a sisterly regard. He had a dim, indistinct recollection of having once met this Malcolm Gordon somewhere in Edinburgh; but then it was in his lazy days, when he took little note of things or persons, or the events passing

around. At last he remembered where and when he had seen him. It was on the night on which he had first seen Caroline,—and, if he recollected rightly, they had come together to the party, where he had met them. He could not, however, recall Malcolm's appearance; but he had an impression that he was rather an agreeable-looking man. He made a violent effort to recollect the terms upon which he and Caroline seemed to be; but almost in vain. He had, however, a confused notion that their manner towards each other had been easy, and brother and sister like.

Altogether he was not much alarmed, —only sufficiently so to cause him to determine to be on the watch, and to prevent, as much as possible, all private intercourse between the two. Every day and every hour he seemed to become more and more attached to Caroline. He loved her with a passion, the intensity of which, a few years before, would have been utterly incomprehensible to him.

This very idea of a rival served to stimulate him. In a few minutes his brow cleared, he became lively and enter-

taining, while his vivacity was tempered by the tenderness Caroline's society never failed to confer. Never had the latter found him so fascinating. Never had she found it so difficult to resist him. But, why should she resist him?—ought she not rather to yield to the impulse which bade her place her hand in his, and say : "Be as happy as I can make you?" Her feelings for the moment said, "Yes!" but her better judgment said, "No: you do not really love this man. What you feel is mere compassion, or but the passing impression of an agreeable manner. In your heart is not one spark of the reverence or the devotion of love. You can love—but not George Smythe. Be not hurried away, then, by a momentary impulse, to do that which all your life you may repent—nay, that which, in itself, is absolutely wrong." Still Caroline could not, however, banish entirely from her manner the softness naturally created by her feelings, and increased by the strains of music to which she was listening.

George Smythe was delighted. It seemed to him that he was gaining

ground. He became more and more devoted. Lady Cornish, and a gentleman who had joined them, were seated in the front of the box. Caroline, who disliked the glare of light, had placed herself on a small sofa, which stood back. George Smythe, who had been standing for some time, now sat down beside her, and began to speak in a low tone. He was only speaking of the music and the singers; but there was something in his lowered voice, and in the glance of his eye, as he looked straight into hers, which alarmed her. She drew back and answered rather more distantly. But her admirer was not on that account discouraged; for, though her manner was colder, it was even perhaps gentler. He did not suspect that it was the feeling that she might be giving pain which produced this gentleness. He half imagined that she was coquetting a little, and the idea pleased him, and increased the hope he already entertained.

Those whose finer feelings have been much blunted by constant intercourse with the great selfish world of mere ordinary society, or whose sympathies have never

been cultivated, are not aware of the extent to which this dread of giving pain operates upon some dispositions. And thus it came to pass that George Smythe went home to-night in remarkably good spirits.

Malcolm Gordon was only detained one day at Southampton. It was, however, late at night when he arrived in London—too late to think of calling on Caroline. It was wonderful, as the time drew near, how the prospect of meeting her once more, interested and excited him. He thought of nothing else all the morning. Like most Anglo-Indians, he was an early riser, and he would have liked to have gone to see her immediately; but it seemed to him that he must not go before one o'clock, at the soonest. Never had hours seemed so long as those which intervened between breakfast-time and one o'clock. He tried first to read the newspapers, and then a book, but found it equally impossible to fix his attention upon either. At last he determined to wander about till one o'clock should arrive. Accordingly, he dressed himself in almost the only European coat he possessed, preparatory to his setting out on

his proposed ramble. Malcolm was not much in the habit of studying the looking-glass, but this morning he certainly looked into it once if not twice, and, as he did so, he thought—"How old I am looking, and how frightfully sunburnt!" And then, turning away, with a smile on his lips—"Pshaw!" he mentally exclaimed, "to think of a withered old Indian, who was never in his best days very handsome, ever dreaming of possessing personal attractions. Yet I am not so very old—only ten years older than Caroline; but then she has always looked upon me as so much older—as her elder brother. And so I am; and I dare say she will not think the less of me because I am not so young-looking as I have been."

Meanwhile, Caroline was still more fidgety and excited than Malcolm. She, too, dressed herself with great care, and after her toilet was finished, was almost as much discontented with her appearance as Malcolm had been with his. Yet she need not to have been so, for never had she looked better. Her clear brown eyes shone with expectation, her cheeks glowed with excitement, and her long

brown ringlets fell down on her pretty blue muslin morning dress, over the fresh folds of which glittered a gold chain—the only ornament she wore—and which had been Malcolm's gift.

Lady Cornish was writing notes in her boudoir—or at least was in her boudoir on pretext of writing notes—and Caroline was glad to have the drawing-rooms all to herself, that no one might remark how absent and restless she was. Lady Cornish was never down to breakfast till eleven, so that Caroline had not so long to wait as Malcolm; but perhaps the time seemed longer, as she knew not when it was to terminate. She could do nothing but wander up and down the great, tenantless, rooms, inspect absently the tables, vases, and beautiful and costly ornaments of every description with which they abounded—look out of the window with a vague expectation between a hope and a dread of seeing some one—or examine the gold timepiece, with astonishment to see how slowly the hands advanced. “Oh! will he ever come?” She was well-nigh sick with expectation.

Once or twice a knock at the door nearly took away her breath.

The index of the timepiece pointed exactly to one o'clock, when there was again a knock at the door. Caroline felt instinctively that it was his. She heard his footstep upon the stairs, and though it was years since she had heard it before, the rapid and decisive tread was as a familiar sound. Her heart beat violently, the blood rushed to her cheeks, and as the door opened, she felt rather than saw that she was in his presence.

"Malcolm! Malcolm!" was all she could say, as she rose hastily, holding out both her hands.

And Malcolm, in the joyful excitement of the moment, clasped her to his heart, and kissed her tenderly—"My darling Caroline!"

And now, to the woman's heart of Caroline Irvine, the old feeling of her girlhood returned with double force. She felt that now, as then, she loved Malcolm Gordon better than all the world. She had been mistaken in supposing that what she felt for him was merely friendship. She felt

that she always had loved him, always must love him, even to the end of her life. And now perhaps the time *might* come when——. But she durst not allow herself to think of that.

Meanwhile, Malcolm rapidly disengaged her from the hurried embrace, colouring a little as he said—"I beg your pardon, Caroline; but you are the first of my home circle. I forgot, for the moment, you were not the little girl I left when I went away."

"Nay, Malcolm," answered Caroline,—but as she spoke she, too, blushed a little; "we have long been brother and sister."

He returned no answer to this, but sat silent for a few seconds. Caroline hardly knew whether she was pleased or vexed. He, meanwhile, had been looking at her, to note the changes time had made. And these, he thought, were all improvements. It seemed to him that she had become a beautiful woman. He almost wished she had not been so handsome. He repressed a sigh, as he inquired—

"Are you to be long in London?"

"Not much longer, I think. Were it not for Lady Cornish I should not have

been here now; but she seems so unwilling to part with me, and it will be long ere I can return again."

"Lady Cornish!" cried Malcolm, suddenly; "do you know, Caroline, I had forgotten I was in her house—and her husband's. I hope Lady Cornish is well?"

"She is as well as she ever is. Should you like to see her?"

"Certainly, if she would not dislike to see me."

"She would be much gratified, I think," and Caroline was rising to go in search of Violet, when Malcolm stopped her,—

"Not yet, Caroline. I have so many things to ask you about home. I shall try to be as little tedious as possible," he added, smiling. "Your long letters and your kind patience with mine, have spoiled me, Caroline. You have much to answer for in making me a less independent man than I used to be;" and again he looked at her with the kind smile of other days. Caroline's eyes shone with pleasure—pleasure at the insinuation that her sympathy was of such consequence to him—pleasure at hearing him speak, and seeing him look

as he used to do. He needed not to have been apprehensive that in personal appearance she would think him changed,—for to her eyes he could never change. Her feelings towards him it was far beyond the power of mere personal accidents to alter. But, except at the very first moment, she had felt as if there was a change—as if a sort of indefinable constraint had come over their intercourse, and now she was glad to hear Malcolm speak in his natural way. She hoped, now that their first mutual awkwardness was over, that their intercourse would proceed in the old familiar style. But in this she was disappointed; for though they now talked of Locharroch, of Catherine and the children, and even of past times, there seemed to prevail in all they said the same sort of intangible formality she had already been conscious of. It was as if neither of them were speaking their exact feelings, or, rather, as if they were both holding back some part of what they felt. Both experienced a feeling resembling disappointment—as if this long-expected interview had not been productive of quite all the satisfaction they had both expected. And

how often does it happen so? How often do those occasions on which we have counted most certainly, even when everything seems to go smoothly and well, fall far short of bestowing the pleasure we had anticipated? Nothing, to all appearance, could have exceeded the friendliness of Malcolm and Caroline; yet both felt that the perfect ease and freedom of their epistolary correspondence was not equalled by that of their personal intercourse. At last Caroline again asked if she should fetch Lady Cornish, and this time Malcolm answered,—

“Yes, certainly, if you please;” in a tone as if he were not entirely satisfied with the proposal, and yet as if he did not like to refuse again. And, in truth, he was unwilling to terminate the interview, from a notion that if it were prolonged, something more satisfactory must be produced by it.

Lady Cornish was not looking well this morning. She looked even more than usually sallow, haggard, and anxious. She was, however, as usual, carefully dressed, and her manner was perfectly self-possessed. Malcolm positively started as he

saw the change which the years had made. Was it, indeed, possible that this thin, faded, sickly, unhappy-looking woman was the lively, beautiful, fascinating Violet. He was so much shocked, that, for the moment, he almost forgot everything else. Violet perceived his emotion, and partly guessed the cause. Except Caroline, he was the only human being whose pity her proud spirit could have borne. For a second, as the sight of Malcolm Gordon called up memories of days long past, and brought before her, like living realities, the scenes and feelings of those by-gone times, her heart felt as if it would break, and she was on the point of yielding to one of her fits of violent emotion. But with that astonishing command over her mere outward conduct which she habitually possessed, and which alone could ever have enabled her in society, as she so frequently did, to repress all demonstration of the tornados of feeling to which she was subject, she now controlled herself, and with a voice, sweet-toned as it used to be long ago, and in which it would have required a nice ear to detect a faint tremulousness, which, however, both Mal-

colm and Caroline *fancied* they perceived, she said, "I am happy to see you again, Mr. Gordon."

He was not quite so composed as he answered, "I, too, am glad to have met Lady Cornish."

An awkward pause succeeded this speech, but Violet was too graceful to permit it to be of long duration. She continued,—

"I trust you will not be a stranger here while you are in London. You must, I know, wish to see as much as possible of your friend Caroline; and I am sure it will give Sir Arthur Cornish, as well as myself, great pleasure to see you here as often as you can come. I give a ball to-morrow night, and shall be glad of the favour of your company."

Malcolm bowed. He hesitated to accept an invitation to the house of Sir Arthur Cornish—the man whom of all the men on earth he most disliked—even to meet Caroline Irvine. Moreover, he was not at all certain, even though Lady Cornish had said so, that he should be a welcome guest; and Malcolm Gordon was not without a tinge of Highland pride, or perhaps, in

this instance at least, his feelings might lay claim to the worthier dignity of honest self-respect.

Whether Lady Cornish guessed what was passing in his mind or not, he could not tell; but she was too polite to press the matter. In her own easy and graceful manner she turned the conversation on his voyage, and they all three continued to speak on this subject for a few minutes; at the end of which Malcolm rose to take leave. He was just in the act of shaking hands with Violet, when Sir Arthur Cornish suddenly walked into the room. Malcolm had all along borne in mind the probability there was of seeing him, and he was not therefore taken by surprise. His manner instantly became cold and distant, yet not so much so as to be wanting in politeness to the master of the house in which he found himself. Sir Arthur Cornish, on the contrary, was more than ordinarily cordial. He was in one of his most agreeable moods, and even Malcolm, with the strong opinion he entertained of his selfishness, cold-heartedness and insincerity, was not, at least for the moment, quite proof against the fascination of his

address. He was too true and upright himself to be able to realise in the instant all its hollowness. He even began to ask himself, with the candour of a generous mind, and with that humorous acquaintance with the foibles of human nature which he possessed in an eminent degree, united with the still rarer consciousness that he was not himself exempt from them, if jealousy might not have made him unjust to Sir Arthur Cornish, or, perhaps, jealousy, only too natural on the part of the latter, might have made Sir Arthur appear in his worst colours to his rival. He longed to ask Caroline,—for on her judgment and charity he had equal dependence. He determined to do so the following evening at the ball, at which he had now made up his mind to be present. Meanwhile Sir Arthur thus expressed himself,—

“I hope while you are in London we shall frequently have the pleasure of seeing you here. I know you have the same value for Miss Irvine’s friendship that we have; but you must not forget that Lady Cornish and I too are old acquaintances—though I believe I was very disagreeable

at that time," he added, with a sort of frankness which was graceful rather than ingenuous,—for ingenuous was almost the only thing Arthur Cornish was incapable of seeming under any circumstances. One always felt, however agreeable he might be, that his heart was not laid open. Malcolm was puzzled between this instinctive feeling and the apparent frankness of his tone; puzzled between his impressions, both past and present, and his ideas of what was right and just. He determined, as the wisest course to hold, to keep his judgment for the present suspended. Meanwhile, however, there was nothing to prevent his visiting at the house, and he was glad of this on account of seeing Caroline. He finally took leave, promising to come to the ball.

As soon as he was gone Sir Arthur left the room,—and Lady Cornish, throwing herself into her friend's arms, burst into a violent fit of weeping. Caroline wept too, but more tranquilly.

"I am glad it is over," cried Violet at last. "Oh, Caroline! it made me think of so much—so much that has passed since I saw him. But the punishment

has fallen where it was deserved. It has been better for him, for I should not have made him a good wife, and he knows it now, though he looks so sorry for me. He looks very little older, I think."

"Not at all," cried Caroline.

Violet looked earnestly at her for a minute, and Caroline's eyes fell beneath her friend's gaze. And then Caroline imagined—but it might have been imagination—that she heard Violet murmur, as if in soliloquy, "Poor George!" When Caroline ventured again to look at her friend, the latter was still weeping, but far more gently than before. Caroline put her arms round her, kissed her tenderly, and soothed her into calmness. With Caroline, Violet was quite passive; the former had over her an influence such as no other possessed.

In the unselfish endeavour to soothe her friend, Caroline recovered her own composure. She felt now more than ever that it was her duty to discourage George Smythe. Her tender conscience even reproached her for having already permitted him so much of her society; she was seriously annoyed when she recollected that

she had promised to dance the first two dances with him the next evening, and she also regretted that she had agreed to accept a bouquet from him. It was the only present, among many costly gifts he had wished to bestow upon her, she had ever consented to receive.

CHAPTER VI.

THE evening of Lady Cornish's "At Home" had now arrived. It would have been difficult to say whether Violet or Caroline felt the more excited by the prospect of the ball, the one painfully, the other pleurably. Yet neither of them, as may easily be believed, had any interest in a ball *per se*, unless the avidity with which the former seized upon any opportunity of banishing her own reflections could have been called an interest. Amusement to-night, however, was out of the question. Mrs. Herbert Cayley was to be at the ball, and Violet felt that every faculty of her mind, every feeling of her heart, would be strained to the uttermost. She felt that she must nerve herself to more than common endurance.

George Smythe—a very unusual circumstance—had not been with them the whole morning, having had an engagement which he could not possibly avoid fulfilling. He consoled himself, however, with the idea that he should be with Caroline all the evening. Meanwhile he indulged himself in purchasing for her the most beautiful and costly bouquet to be had in London. George Smythe regarded his intended gift with satisfaction, and smiled complacently to himself as he pictured how well she would look when she wore it. And that she would wear it was certain, as she had promised so to do. He had had a note from Lady Cornish in the morning, in which she had mentioned that Mr. Gordon had returned, and was to be at the ball. For a second or two George had felt a little discomposed by this intelligence; but he quickly rallied. Many things seemed to make it improbable that Mr. Gordon had been the object of Caroline's affection; but even supposing it were otherwise, she had said she had no attachment now, and he was resolved, by every means in his power, to show to Mr. Gordon and the rest of

the world that Caroline was his. He *would* not lose her now, he was determined.

Lady Cornish's magnificent rooms were all thrown open. Hundreds of wax lights burnt in the crystal chandeliers, and were reflected by the large mirrors. The apartments were glittering with gold, and damask, and porcelain ; some of them were adorned by fine paintings and beautiful statues ; brilliant music came upon the ear ; and the mistress of all this magnificence paced slowly up and down one of the still untenanted apartments, attired in white lace and diamonds. She was elegant and graceful as ever, and though pale and still as marble, she did not look old by candle-light, and to-night she had determined to look her best.

Caroline was not quite dressed yet. She, too, wore white lace ; but instead of diamonds, her sole ornament was a wreath of wild roses in her hair. She remembered once, long ago, that Malcolm had admired a garland of natural roses she had woven for herself, and she had now chosen one as nearly like it as possible, in the hope that he might admire it still. Beside her lay

an exquisite bouquet of the rarest exotics, and on the sofa spread out before her an Indian shawl. The last was a gift from Malcolm, and had been sent this afternoon. Caroline, now dressed, and the maid dismissed, looked at it earnestly; then stooping down and kissing it, took her splendid bouquet with somewhat of a reluctant air, and ran down-stairs. In the gallery upon which the doors of the drawing-rooms opened, she met Major Smythe, looking unusually handsome, elegant, and animated.

“Miss Irvine!” he cried, regarding her admiringly; “how fortunate I am in having met you! Let me have the pleasure of conducting you into the room.”

Caroline could not, of course, avoid accepting his offered arm, though a little chagrined that she should have met him thus. She did not at all suspect what was indeed the true state of the case, that George, not finding her in the drawing-rooms with the company which had now begun to assemble, had come out on the gallery for the purpose of watching her come down-stairs, that he might lead her into the room. He was now more anxious

than ever to impress the public with a belief in their engagement, and did not scruple at any means of doing so save telling a positive falsehood. George Smythe belonged to that not very rare class of persons who, though they would not tell a lie for all the world, yet do not mind in the least attempting to deceive. Caroline had just taken his arm, when she saw Malcolm coming up-stairs.

"There is Mr. Gordon!" she cried; "I must speak to him."

George Smythe would have prevented her, if possible, but of course he could not attempt it. He would not, however, permit her to quit his arm.

"I am so glad you have come early, Malcolm," cried Caroline.

Malcolm looked at her ingenuous, radiant face, and smiled familiarly and kindly as he used to do long ago.

"I had hoped to have been earlier," he said, "that I might have had a few words with you ere the crowd had arrived."

George Smythe now felt a little uneasy. He bent his head, and reminded Caroline, in a low voice, of her engagement to dance with him, telling her the set was forming.

"I must go now, Malcolm," cried Caroline, gaily, for his smile had put her in good spirits.

George hurried her away. Malcolm followed more slowly. There was something in George Smythe's manner to Caroline which had struck him disagreeably. They were evidently very intimate, so intimate that he was leading her into the room, and spoke to her in a lowered tone. Then they had been engaged to dance. He had noticed, too, the magnificent bouquet Caroline carried in her hand, and as he had followed them into the room, he had heard her say,—“I have to thank you for these beautiful flowers.” And again, her partner had whispered in reply. All this, somehow or other, Malcolm did not like. In particular he was annoyed about the flowers. He had spent a great part of the early part of that day in looking for a bouquet for Caroline himself—a bouquet of heather, and it was with great difficulty he had been able to procure it. Everything, however, is to be had in London, and so at last he had succeeded.

He had pleased himself all the day with

the idea of presenting it to her,—of seeing her wear it, and of talking to her of that land where it grew wild on the mountains, and which they both so dearly loved. It was with a feeling of mortification he contemplated the brilliant exotics, and contrasted them with his simple little nosegay. He had shaken hands with Lady Cornish on entering, but for the time he had almost forgotten the interest he had once had in her. She and Caroline were now both dancing. He looked at them, and wondered as he remembered the time when Violet had been all the world to him, and Caroline nothing more than a good-natured little girl. Yet he found that not only now, but always, he had instinctively felt, although he had but lately recognized the feeling,—that Caroline possessed the stronger and clearer mind, the higher principles, and the tenderer and more affectionate nature. In passion, perhaps, she might be inferior to Lady Cornish,—and yet she might only seem to be so, because her feelings were more under her command. She had certainly the warmest, kindest, and most sympathising heart in all the

world. Her goodness to him from the beginning of their acquaintance, through all these long years,—goodness which he had never sufficiently prized,—showed it abundantly. It was written on her beaming face, which, pretty though it was, possessed a charm in the eyes of Malcolm Gordon far, far beyond what mere form or colour could have given — an undying charm—a fadeless beauty. Caroline Irvine had always been dear to him, and now he loved her with as much of passion, and far more of esteem, reverence, tenderness, than he had ever felt for any other woman. Of all the women on earth he was convinced Caroline was the most exactly suited to him. He thought of her once more in the highlands. He thought of her at Ardennan. She seemed indissolubly associated in his mind with the birchen glades and shining lakelets. He pictured her in the antique drawing-room by the cheerful winter fire. He fancied her brightening by her cheerful presence all the dark winter days. And as he caught another glimpse of her eyes, “affectionate and glad,” like those of Gertrude of Wyoming, he fancied those eyes shining

on him lovingly evermore. Oh ! if they were only once more together in the highlands ! wandering by the calm loch, with the hills all around them, while the sun set red behind the dark pines, or the moon rose clear above the mountain-tops, as in days of yore ! Beautiful and blissful as it seemed, it might not be so very impossible.

Such were the thoughts which, reverie-fashion, yet occupied the mind of Malcolm Gordon, when he heard a gentleman near him inquire of a lady,

“ Who is that good-looking girl, dancing with that young officer there ? ”

“ Which young officer ? ”

“ There, the girl with the beautiful bouquet ! ”

“ Don’t you know ? That is Major Smythe, of the —th Dragoons, Lady Cornish’s brother ; and that is the young Scotch lady to whom he is engaged. ”

Malcolm felt as if he had been suddenly shot. He continued, however, to listen.

“ He is very devoted. They say it is an attachment of long standing on both sides. He fell in love with her some years ago, when his regiment was in Scotland. ”

"Indeed! She would be a very handsome woman if she had only got a little more style. When does the happy event take place?"

"At the end of the season, it is said. They then go abroad, I believe."

"It is all quite fixed, then—not mere report?"

"Certainly not. Major Smythe does not deny it; and surely you have only to look at them. I never saw a more lover-like pair in my life."

The gentleman looked at them, and laughed.

"Certainly it does seem as if you were right;" he answered. Malcolm, too, looked, and if a spark of doubt remained on his mind, it was extinguished at once. They had now finished dancing, and Caroline leaned upon his arm. She was a little flushed with the exercise, and her eyes were shining brightly, while her brown curls fell a little back from her countenance. George Smythe was looking down fondly on her face with an unmistakeable expression of love and admiration; and then he whispered something almost in her ear. He seemed to take no pains to conceal

the terms they were on. Only once in all his life before had Malcolm sustained such a shock ; and if the blow had then been more stunning, the injury had not been deeper. The exquisite vision of the last few minutes faded at once : a blank heavy chill struck to his heart. Never, no never were its true and warm affections to meet with an answer from kindred feelings ! Alone, alone all his life ! Such had been, such was to be his fate. Never till that moment of bitterest disappointment had he been aware how entirely he loved her. For a long time he had cherished a hope, though but half acknowledged, of marrying Caroline, as the woman of all others most entirely suited to him ; but never had he known till now how that hope had become entwined with all other hopes—the very life and substance of all the rest. He stole another glance at Caroline. George Smythe was still speaking to her. She was grave, and looking thoughtfully down. Malcolm's heart swelled almost to bursting, and hastily averting his gaze, he turned towards an open window near which he was standing. Crushing the heath-blossoms violently in

his hand, he threw them out upon the balcony; then moving just within the shallow recess he looked out upon the broad moonlight, and the heavy shadows of the opposite houses; and "Be still, my soul," was the command he strove to utter to himself. He longed to be able to leave the ball, but the crowd was now so great that it was just then impossible to reach a door.

How long he had stood looking out on the summer night he did not know,—it had seemed to him whole ages of pain, but perhaps it was only a few minutes,—when he felt a light touch on his arm. He started and looked round. It was Caroline Irvine, and her eyes met his with a somewhat anxious expression. Suddenly he remembered a scene years ago on a frozen loch, surrounded by snowy mountains, when that same kind voice had spoken to him in the moment of distress. He had heeded it but slightly then; but now—now to him all the bliss of earth was concentrated in its simple tones.

"Are you not well, dear Malcolm?" she said. He smothered a groan, and instinctively turned away. He felt that

he could not endure another look so kind—another inquiry so affectionate. “No, no! that is, quite well,—quite well, thank you.”

What could be the matter? Perhaps he had not overcome his old feelings towards Lady Cornish so entirely as he had at first supposed. This idea caused Caroline some uneasiness, but for the time she forgot herself in thinking of him.

“Don’t you dance, Malcolm?” she said, thinking it better to take no further notice of his distress, as her having done so already seemed to have pained him.

“No, I have not danced for a long time.”

“Oh, but begin again! I shall ask Major Smythe to introduce you to a partner.”

He returned no answer. It was all he could do to resist rushing through the crowd out of the room. With wonderful outward composure, however, he answered,

“No, I thank you; I do not care for strangers.”

“Then,” she said, blushing a little, and with an arch glance, “will you dance with me? Don’t you remember I asked you

once before, and you refused? You must not treat me so this time, otherwise I shall think I have really been guilty of an impropriety."

She had expected that Malcolm would have laughed at her for this speech; but his countenance continued grave.

"Indeed I cannot dance, Caroline, nor can I jest. You were always good, and I trust you may always be happy; but you carry your sunshine within."

Never had Caroline been more surprised in her life than by this unsuitably solemn speech. She felt quite at a loss. She rallied herself, however, more certain than ever that something had happened to discompose him.

"Then will you take me to the refreshment room? I am sure you would be the better for a glass of wine. You see I exercise the privilege of a sister."

Caroline's manner was almost caressing. She was so sorry for him that it placed her quite at ease. She had taken his arm; and the crowd in that direction not being now so dense, they moved towards the door. They had not proceeded far when they met Sir Arthur Cornish, with a lady

leaning on his arm. She was a very fine woman, with a tall commanding figure, a complexion fair as marble, magnificent dark eyes, and long black hair. Except her eyes, her features in general were not very handsome; but her whole appearance was striking in the extreme. There was an expression in her face, however, which Caroline did not like; it was at once triumphant and sinister. She felt instinctively that truth and goodness were not there. As they passed, Caroline heard Sir Arthur introduce her to his wife as "Mrs. Herbert Cayley." Violet's face became ashy and rigid. She bowed, however, composedly, but without speaking. Mrs. Cayley, in a soft, musical, insincere voice, expressed her delight at becoming acquainted with Lady Cornish. She had heard so much of her from her friend Sir Arthur.

Violet's pride sustained her now. She replied coldly, but with perfect politeness and self-possession. Sir Arthur and his companion then passed on.

Violet's eye caught Caroline's for a moment, and the latter was shocked inexpressibly by the look of hopeless misery,

of utter prostration, the face of Violet expressed. Malcolm did not notice it. He was too entirely absorbed by his own feelings to notice even Lady Cornish. But her look haunted Caroline. As she met George Smythe in the doorway, she stopped to whisper to him, "I am afraid Violet is ill. I wish you would go to her."

Malcolm saw the whisper, but did not hear its import; and Caroline felt his arm suddenly contract, as if he had received an electric shock. She was greatly perplexed. This was certainly the strangest night of her life. She felt as if she had got entangled in some enchanted maze. She could not divine what anything meant.

Malcolm did not speak; and she, too, now felt as if some sudden spell had bound her to silence. She wondered what would happen next. She took a glass of negus, and Malcolm mechanically did the same. He had now recovered, in a measure, from the first shock, and began to talk in what seemed to Caroline a strange, unnatural sort of way, about the heat, the crowd, and the glare of light. She tried to answer easily and naturally,—

“ Yes, it is a very different scene from those where we used to meet. If one could fancy oneself awake at such an hour at Locharroch, how very different it would be to see the moon shining on the loch, and the hills and woods all so dark and still, with an owl, perhaps, flying noiselessly through the trees. And the yellow broom, and the briar rose,—I can fancy now how deliciously they scent the night air. How I wish we were there, instead of here, in the midst of this artificial multitude !”

Malcolm started. “ Do you really, Caroline ?” he asked, for the moment suspecting her of affectation. But as he met the glance of her clear, truthful eyes, and looked in her frank, artless countenance, he felt ashamed of the suspicion. But that she should give up that retirement and communion with nature she so much loved for the sake of George Smythe, was only so much the greater proof of her attachment to him. He felt more depressed than ever. Meanwhile Caroline had merely answered his question by the glance which had convinced him of the injustice of his suspicion. She could

not comprehend what was the matter with Malcolm, and she was greatly disappointed by the strangeness of his manner, as she had buoyed herself up all day with the hope of a long chat with him in the evening—a chat in the style of their letters.

They had left the refreshment-room, and were again in the gallery on their return to the drawing-room, when again they met George Smythe.

“I have executed your commission,” he said, in a low tone.

Again Malcolm felt a jealous spasm. “I shall resign you to the care of Major Smythe, Caroline, if you please,” he said suddenly. “It is now time for me to return to the hotel; and as you do not now require my services, I shall take advantage of the favourable opportunity for getting away.” So saying, he quitted Caroline, while George Smythe tenderly took her disengaged hand, and placed it on his arm. Caroline was so taken by surprise, that for a moment she lost her presence of mind. Malcolm was already at the head of the stairs ere she had recovered herself sufficiently to call out, “Malcolm !

—Malcolm!" He turned quickly round at the sound of her voice. "When shall I see you again, Malcolm?"

"Not, certainly, before you return to Scotland. I suppose you will return——"

"Not before *I* return to Scotland!" she cried, in amazement. "Surely you will call before *you* return?"

"I start to-morrow afternoon, and I have so many arrangements to make, that I am afraid it will not be in my power to pay any visits. Have you any commands?"

"None. But surely," she added, hurriedly; for, somewhat impatiently, he had again turned to go down-stairs; "surely—this is a sudden resolution."

"Yes. Circumstances have occurred since I last saw you, which have rendered it advisable for me to leave London as soon as possible."

"Circumstances! I hope nothing—will you write to me?"

"Certainly, if you wish it; but do not let me detain you longer in the draught." He bowed, and was going, when Caroline held out her hand. He took it; but not with the cordial shake of old; and with

a "Good night" to Major Smythe, and without another look at Caroline, hastily ran down-stairs.

The tears started to Caroline's eyes. She was hurt and mortified beyond expression. It was so unlike Malcolm. How could she have offended him? What could he possibly mean by such unkindness? Could he, indeed, be so changed in character as to be put out of humour by a hot room and a crowd? Impossible: for, had not his letters bespoken him the same? Her distress had not passed unnoticed by George Smythe. The whole scene had given him no small disturbance. He had watched Caroline narrowly, and her secret was now no secret to him. He felt positively certain that she did love, or at least had loved Malcolm Gordon. With regard to his feelings, however, and to the footing on which they stood with regard to each other, he was completely in the dark. Appearances would have inclined him to believe that the attachment was mutual; yet this could not be, he thought; otherwise, what obstacle existed to their union? He might even have supposed that they were engaged, and had quarrelled, had not

Caroline positively assured him she was free; and she could have had no possible object in saying so, but the reverse, had it not been the case. The whole tenor of her conduct towards himself, all he knew of her character, forbid him to suppose that she was coquetting with him while she was engaged to another man. He, too, was completely puzzled. One thing, however, was tolerably clear to him, that Malcolm Gordon had resigned her not only willingly, but in a marked manner, into his charge. He, too, had heard it whispered around, that he and Caroline were engaged; and once or twice even he had been complimented on the beauty of his future bride. So far, then, he had triumphed. Malcolm, too, was going tomorrow, and would not see Caroline before he went. He should have her again all to himself, and then he felt secure he should win her at last.

There may appear to be a great deal of selfishness in the hopes and resolves of George Smythe, and doubtless there was; yet, strange to say, he was not at all aware of it himself, and was, generally speaking, by no means of an ungenerous disposition.

He firmly believed, that if he could induce Caroline to marry him, he could make her happy. He had determined to endeavour to do so; and he very sincerely believed that, though she was his superior in character (for that he always acknowledged), it was exceedingly unlikely she would ever obtain so good a husband in point of disposition, or so good a match in point of fortune. He truly thought that, in urging her to this marriage, he was promoting her happiness as much as his own. This opinion blinded him to the want of fairness and truth in some of the measures he adopted. He was no nice casuist; he was too indolent seriously to scrutinize his own motives, and, like many greater men, inclination blinded him to duty. He actually did not perceive that in endeavouring to make Malcolm believe they were engaged, he was acting a deceitful and dishonourable part; not, perhaps, according to that worldly code, which proverbially affirms that "all stratagems are lawful in love and war," but according to that higher morality where falsehood is always falsehood, and where generosity means self-denial, and not self-indulgence. But in this higher

morality, George Smythe had never been instructed. . He was an honourable man of the world, with many good impulses—nothing more, nothing better. With admirable tact, he now conducted Caroline to the room adjoining the dancing-room, which communicated with it by folding doors, and where the non-dancing part of the company were seated, seeming to take no notice of her discomposure, and carefully refraining from teasing her by making demands upon her attention. Annoyed that he should have noticed her discomposure, she speedily recovered herself, and began to make a few remarks upon indifferent topics. He had been standing a little apart, but he now drew near, and with his wonted ease and grace, immediately entered into conversation. Caroline could not help admiring the delicacy with which he avoided the smallest allusion to what had just passed, and seconded her own efforts to appear unconstrained and unconscious. No one would have guessed, from his manner, that he had noticed anything remarkable in Caroline; yet Caroline herself felt convinced that nothing had escaped him. She was sincerely grateful

for the good feeling and good breeding he had shown towards her. She had, perhaps, never thought more highly of George Smythe than at this moment, while, at the same time, she was more than ever entirely conscious that she loved, and always must love, another.

Having now, however, completely recovered her presence of mind, she began to think of Violet, and looked round in every direction in the hope of seeing her. But Lady Cornish had gone into the next room. She now asked George Smythe,—

“How did you find your sister? I thought her looking ill.”

“She says she is well, but I do not think so. She looks miserably ill.”

“I wish this night were over,” said Caroline.

George Smythe was silent for a second or two, and then he answered, hesitatingly,—

“I think it is her mind. She is not happy. What do you think, Caroline? I have long wished to speak to you on this painful subject.”

“I fear it is so,” Caroline answered, pleased with the feeling George invariably

showed towards his sister, even when he affected apathy.

“ Violet,” he added, “ was one who required in her husband an even greater than ordinary share of consideration and tenderness. With all her faults—with all her selfwill—had she found this in the man she loved, she might have been led, as by a silken thread, by means of her strong and true feelings. But she has not found this—she has found the reverse. Sir Arthur Cornish is a man utterly devoid of heart. At this very moment he is wringing her heart, and he knows he is.” And the speaker’s voice, though low, was tremulous with indignation. After a short pause, he continued: “ For Violet’s sake, I keep, as you see, on friendly terms with her husband; but there is not a man in England whom I dislike as I do Arthur Cornish. It does not become me, who have so many faults of my own, to be severe on those of others; but cruelty, of all things, is what I cannot forgive; more especially cruelty to a woman, and one whom he knows worships him.” Caroline had never before seen her companion so indignant. He added, more calmly, and in

a low and tender tone, "He throws away what I should consider the chief treasure of life—a wife's affection—were I so blessed as to possess it."

Caroline was silent. She felt they were approaching dangerous ground. He then proposed they should join the dancers,—a proposal to which she hastily acceded.

The first couple she saw, on entering the dancing-room, were Sir Arthur Cornish and Mrs. Herbert Cayley. They were in earnest conversation during a pause in the polka. They were standing under a chandelier; and as Mrs. Cayley raised her countenance to her partner, her dark eyes flashed with remarkable brilliancy, and a slight flush tinged her fair, marble complexion. He meanwhile looked devoted to her. He looked as Caroline remembered to have sometimes seen him look, long ago, when he was addressing poor Maria Ross,—and she wondered now if he were equally insincere. She trusted so for Violet's sake, as well as Mrs. Cayley's,—who, however, did not seem a woman at all likely to break her heart. And in truth Caroline judged rightly in thinking thus,—she had, in fact,

no heart to break. She was as perfect a specimen of a coquette as ever existed.

Violet had only spoken the truth, when she said Mrs. Herbert Cayley's grand object in life was to seduce the affections of other women's husbands and lovers. She was governed by a devouring vanity, —coupled with a strange cruel pleasure in the torments of her victims. Yet was Mrs. Herbert Cayley not without her good points—like almost all mankind. She made, upon the whole, an attentive wife to her rich, foolish, nobody of a husband;—while he, worshipping her beauty and talents, and with the most entire confidence in her regard for himself, was rather vain, than otherwise, of the crowd of admirers who constantly followed in her train. He did not guess that the best security for his wife's honourable conduct lay neither in her principles, nor in her feelings,—but in her utter want of heart. But she had met with her match in Sir Arthur Cornish. With more passion, he had almost as little heart as herself;—while his vanity was quite equal to hers,—and his pride greater. He never entered into a love-affair without determin-

ing to come off conqueror,—and such was his determination in the present instance.

He had been attracted to Mrs. Cayley, in the first place, by her extreme beauty, her fame for breaking hearts, and her immaculate reputation. She was just the style of woman he admired,—while his vanity and pride alike were enlisted in favour of his resolution to triumph where all had failed, and bring this haughty enslaver and contemner of hearts to his feet. Her motives had been equally admirable. He was handsome, distinguished, her superior in birth and station,—was said to have made a love marriage,—to be idolized by his wife,—and to be quite irresistible to all women. Through his means, and an introduction to his wife,—which she did not doubt being able to make him procure for her,—Mrs. Cayley hoped to rise a grade in the fashionable world;—while to make Lady Cornish jealous would add a delightful piquancy to the whole affair. Sir Arthur Cornish, so irresistible to all other women, would find that she could resist him. He should be her slave,—and she would parade her captive in the face of his wife and of all London.

For several months had this singular struggle been going on between these well-matched—adversaries, shall I call them? and the victory was still uncertain. To-night, however, the battle seemed to be approaching the decisive point.

For some time, Mrs. Herbert Cayley had been privately enraged that she had not obtained the *entrée* at Lady Cornish's; and, now that she had succeeded, she had determined, by way of revenge for the delay, to make her hostess miserably jealous. For this reason she lavished more than her ordinary attentions upon Sir Arthur,—and kept him by her side the whole evening. Although he partly suspected her motive, his vanity led him to suppose that another might be coupled with it,—and at all events he determined to make the most of the opportunity thus presented to him. And none knew better than Sir Arthur Cornish how to make the best of such an opportunity. Nothing could baffle him,—save the simplicity and truthfulness of a girl such as Caroline Irvine. And it is pleasant to believe, whatever romance-writers may have affirmed to the contrary, that genuine sim-

plicity, and earnest truthfulness, generally are more than a match for the most consummate artfulness. But it is not as weapons to combat duplicity that they act, but as a shield to blunt its shafts, and turn them aside.

I shall not stop minutely to detail the circumstances of this evening's flirtation between Mrs. Herbert Cayley and Sir Arthur Cornish, as I am of opinion that it would not greatly tend to the edification of my readers. Suffice it to say, from the motives I have attempted to indicate, and partly no doubt also from the impulses of the moment on both sides, they both committed themselves in a way they had never done before; and being in the house of Sir Arthur Cornish of course made the flirtation the more conspicuous.

Persons began to look and then to whisper,—while glances of commiseration or curiosity were turned on "poor Lady Cornish." But pity and curiosity were alike baffled. Lady Cornish's countenance was pale as that of the dead,—but as cold and as unmoved likewise. Her calm blue eye betrayed not by a single glance that she saw aught that could affect her. Her

manner was self-possessed ; and to all as punctiliously attentive as was consistent with good breeding.

By most persons she was set down as a cold, unfeeling woman. The compassionate ceased to pity her ; and the prying and the malicious, disappointed in being able to point to Lady Cornish as the broken-hearted wife, and to abuse Sir Arthur accordingly, indemnified themselves by abusing her.

Many said that, — “ Great allowance must be made for Sir Arthur, considering how cold-hearted his wife seemed to be ; ” or that, — “ Doubtless she was quite contented with her husband’s name and rank, her fine rooms and fine diamonds, — and did not care for his affections.” Few, very few indeed, supposed that that cold exterior might be but a disguise ; and not one, save George and Caroline, guessed how the flames blazed beneath the snow. But even they were far from realising the degree of wild and fearful agony which rent in twain the proud and passionate heart of the wretched Violet. She felt on the verge of madness ; yet ever the wilder and more intense her jealousy became, —

the stronger became her resolution to endure it to the end !

“No one shall pity me. I will not gratify that woman by one look of pain. I will bear it to the last, if the effort should kill me !”

And with resolution surpassing that of a martyr, this soul-stricken woman smiled composedly on all her guests, and, with every form the most rigid politeness could demand, bade each good-night, — even Mrs. Herbert Cayley herself, who was one of the last to depart, — and who was handed to her carriage by Sir Arthur Cornish.

At last they were all gone, even George Smythe. Violet and Caroline were alone in the large front drawing-room. Violet, in her lace and diamonds, her face cold and still as ever, stood motionless as a statue underneath one of the chandeliers. Caroline, seated on a sofa at some little distance, regarded her earnestly. Between this room and the ball-room, the folding-doors were still thrown wide open ; and on the waxed floor of the vast and deserted apartment Sir Arthur now paced gloomily up and down. At last he entered the room where the two ladies were ; and

as he passed his wife, he made some trivial remark in his ordinary tone of cold politeness. Suddenly the statue moved. A glance, or rather a flash like fire from steel, shot from the still blue eye.

"Leave me!" she said, in such a tone, so low, so quiet, yet so commanding, that Caroline did not wonder that even Sir Arthur Cornish went at once.

As soon as her husband was gone, Violet turned to Caroline, and in a low tone, and with a look of the intensest agony, said,—

"Caroline, my heart is broken."

Caroline approached her and took her hand. She could say nothing to comfort her,—for the only kind of comfort she could give Violet would not consent to receive. Violet only replied to her caress by a glance so wild that, to Caroline, it seemed to border on insanity. At last she said,—

"Ring the bell, Caroline,—I want my maid."

Now nothing could have been more unlike Violet than to ask Caroline to ring the bell. Hitherto, almost to the annoyance of the latter, she had invariably

insisted on doing everything of that kind herself. Caroline hesitated ; “ Perhaps, dearest Violet, you will allow me to act as your maid to-night ? ”

“ No, Caroline ; I thank you for your kind intention ; but no one on earth, not even you, can do me good now. It is all over—for ever ! God bless you ! Good night ! ”


Then hurriedly, but with the same terrible calmness which had already alarmed Caroline, Lady Cornish crossed the floor, and herself rang the bell, reiterating, “ Good night ! ”

Caroline could not remain longer. Very unwillingly she left Violet alone. It was a relief, however, in the course of a few minutes, to hear the latter, along with her maid, pass the door of her room on the way to her own.

CHAPTER VII.

CAROLINE was soon in bed; but weary as she was in body and spirit, she could not sleep. She lay revolving in her mind the various events and scenes of this strange evening. But although harassed by doubts and perplexities of every description, and haunted by innumerable modes of solving them, she felt utterly incapable of exercising her judgment so far as to separate the true from the false, or the likely from the unlikely. It was as if her mind had lost the power of estimating the relative value of arguments, while it had acquired a more than ordinary activity in suggesting them. Neither could Caroline control her thoughts, or in any degree determine their subject. Like some complicated piece of machinery,

which retains the motive power after the regulating power has been withdrawn, her mind was driven in a rapid and ceaseless whirl. Violet—Malcolm—these were the two centre ideas of the mental vortex, and which of the two made her the more utterly miserable it would have been difficult to say. Dark, vague, but certain sorrow appeared to encompass the fate of the former, while the latter—oh! what could he mean? how had she offended him? And was all his considerate affection for his little sister, all his tender and confidential regard for his dear friend Caroline, indeed over? for Caroline was just in that frame of mind—an uncommon one with her—when all misfortunes appear irremediable. He was to leave London to-morrow. She should have no opportunity of asking him how she had displeased him. There would be no possibility of an explanation. He was lost to her for ever, and she loved him far more dearly than she had imagined; and now he, too, would never love her! And then it was that Caroline discovered that all through these years of separation, unconsciously to herself, she had cherished a



hope that one day he would love her in return; and now that hope was cruelly blasted in the very moment in which it had seemed to begin to give promise of fruition. He was gone, and she should not see him again! And then came the reflection, that while he was all to her, she was nothing to him,—a reflection attended with the old, sinking feeling of mortification, she used long ago to experience; but bitterer, far bitterer now than then—inexpressibly bitter! Sinking back on her pillow, she mentally exclaimed, “I am the most miserable being in the world!” when suddenly, with a feeling of shame and remorse at her impatience, she remembered Violet. How much happier she was than poor Lady Cornish! Had she not a doting father and sister, a happy home, kind friends, and above all, had she not hitherto had the support and the love which is beyond all earthly blessings? And should she forfeit it now? Should she strike on the same fatal rock upon which poor Violet had been shipwrecked? Ah, no; poor, wayward child that she was! And bursting into tears, she wept silently, and strove to pray for patience

and forgiveness. Gradually her mind became calmer, and she was at last in that state of demi-unconsciousness, which if not positively sleep, is its certain precursor, when she was roused by hearing the handle of her door move, and starting hastily up, she cried, with the alarm common to those who are disturbed at an unusual hour, "Who is there?"

In the pale morning light, as it streamed through the smoky atmosphere, and between the silk window-curtains, Caroline dimly distinguished a dark figure enter the room, and swiftly though noiselessly approach her bed. As it drew nearer, however, she recognised the features of Lady Cornish's maid, and perceived with alarm that they were now expressive of the utmost distress and terror.

"What is the matter?" she cried, hastily.

"Oh, Miss! you are awake. I was afraid of frightening you by waking you suddenly. Oh, Miss! my lady is so ill. I wish you would come to her, for indeed, indeed I don't know what to do; I don't indeed, Miss!"

Caroline was now up, and putting on her shoes and her dressing-gown.

"Have you sent for a doctor?" she asked, anxiously.

"Yes, Miss. I called Henry first, and he has gone. Oh, be quick, Miss, if you please, for I am so frightened."

Her entreaty might have been spared, for Caroline was ready. Anxiously and hastily she accompanied the woman to her friend's chamber. As they went, Jervis—for such was the servant's name—told her that her mistress had seemed "dazed and unconscious-like when she came up to bed, and said she was too tired to undress yet, and would lie down on the bed while she (Jervis) watched by her." She had lain thus for an hour or two, it seemed, when her attendant was alarmed by a sort of hard breathing noise; and on approaching the bed, her lady had complained of a violent spasm in the chest, and said she was dying.

"And I believe she is, Miss," said the woman, "for I never saw any one look more like death, and I durst not be with her alone."

They were now in Violet's room, and

Caroline quickly approached the bed where her unhappy friend lay, still dressed in her ball attire.

A miserable mockery this splendour seemed now ! With her hands crossed lightly over her breast, her long fair hair streaming wildly around, her blue eyes fixed and staring, her countenance ghastly as death and convulsed with pain, lay Lady Cornish. She saw Caroline as she stood by the bed, and making an effort, she stretched out her hand. Caroline pressed it to her lips, while she could not refrain from weeping.

“ My friend — my dear,” said Lady Cornish, with difficulty ; then seeming to obtain a momentary relief, she added, “ Death has come at last, Caroline, and not the death of the righteous ! ”

Caroline shuddered, “ The doctor will soon be here, and perhaps—— ”

Violet smiled—a strange smile, which had the effect of silencing Caroline. Meanwhile Violet continued to hold her hand with a convulsive grasp.

Caroline knew not what to do. She guessed that her friend suffered from some disease of the heart ; but she knew not

what remedies to apply, and she feared to do harm instead of good. She longed for the doctor; the suspense she suffered and the inactivity to which she seemed compelled by circumstances, were almost unbearable. As she sat watching the convulsed countenance of the sufferer, upon which stood huge drops of anguish, though she uttered no complaint, it seemed as if he would never come. And yet he was not really long, for his house was only in the next street, and he had obeyed the summons instantly. A slight bustle at the door of the room announced his arrival. Disengaging herself from her friend, Caroline flew to meet him, and accompanied him to the bedside. With the intensest anxiety she watched his countenance. Stooping down, he asked Lady Cornish a few questions with regard to her sensations. She answered composedly, and then added; "I know I am dying."

He made no reply, but ordered some slight palliative. His manner was kind and gentle, but Caroline saw at once he had no hope. At last he turned to

her, and asked, "Where is Sir Arthur Cornish?"

It struck Caroline that there was a slight shade of indignation in his tone.

"In his own room, I believe," she answered.

"Let him be called instantly, at least—if he wishes to see his wife."

It was wonderful to Caroline, even at the moment, how composed she felt. Passing into the dressing-room she rang the bell. It was answered by Henry, whom she requested to tell his master to come thither immediately. Henry called his master's valet, whom he found asleep in an easy chair in his own room, and the latter presented himself to Caroline.

"If you please, Miss," said the man, "my master is busy in his private sitting-room, and he gave positive orders that he was not to be disturbed on any account. It is as much as my place is worth, Miss. Perhaps, Miss, if it is not asking too much, you would go to him yourself?"

It was reasonable and natural that the man should not wish to run the risk of losing his place. Caroline did not hesi-

tate a moment. She felt nerved for anything. Going down-stairs, therefore, and along a long passage, at the end of which was situated Sir Arthur's private sitting-room, she knocked at the door.

"Who is there?" he asked, in a tone of displeasure.

"It is I—Caroline Irvine."

"Miss Irvine!" he exclaimed, still impatiently, but with more civility, "I will open the door for you immediately."

And in effect, in about a minute, he did so. Sir Arthur was attired in dressing-gown and slippers. He had apparently been writing, to judge from the papers and writing-materials scattered over the table. Among these papers Caroline's eye was more especially attracted by the corner of a letter upon the desk, which peeped from beneath some sheets of blotting-paper apparently thrown over it for the purpose of concealing it. The suspicion did for one moment, glance across her mind, though hardly recognised amid the one absorbing thought which filled it, that this letter was to Mrs. Herbert Cayley.

"May I ask what is your business

with me at this strange hour?" said Sir Arthur, with constrained politeness, as he admitted Caroline; "let me know how I can serve you."

"You cannot serve me," Caroline answered courageously, continuing in a voice of the deepest emotion, while her lip trembled and tears started to her eyes; "I have come to tell you that Lady Cornish is very ill. She has been suddenly and alarmingly seized."

"I am sorry to hear it," he answered coolly; "pray send for the doctor immediately. He is the proper person to apply to in such a case."

"He has been sent for, and is here,—and it is at his desire I have intruded upon you. I fear he thinks your wife is very ill. Indeed, you must come to her immediately."

"I am very sorry, indeed,—and if I could hope to be of any service to her I should come instantly, even busy as I am. But she has yourself, the doctor, and her maid,—all more fit to attend to her than I am. Pray let her have everything that is necessary, send for the

best medical advice in London. Let no trouble be spared."

"The best medical advice has already been sent for; but I fear you misunderstand me, Sir Arthur. You must see her, for your own sake as well as hers. This is no common attack. She may be dying."

"Dying!" he exclaimed, almost angrily, yet a little alarmed; "nonsense! she has been dying a dozen of times at least. It is that outrageous temper of hers. I thought one of these passionate fits was coming on by her manner to-night. You do not know her as I do, Miss Irvine. If you did, you would not be quite so much alarmed. It is very distressing to me indeed to know the way in which my wife exposes herself to her visitors and servants; and it would be still more distressing to me to witness it. Excuse me, therefore, at present, more especially as I am very busy." And he made a slight movement of impatience. Caroline was now very indignant.

"I wished to spare your feelings too sudden a shock, Sir Arthur," she cried;

“but I find I must be more explicit. Violet is dying!—nothing can save her. Doctor —— says it is impossible she can live many hours.”

And overcome by her own feelings, Caroline burst into tears. Suddenly Sir Arthur Cornish became deadly pale, and for a moment he held by a chair, as if for support. Quickly recovering himself, however, and pressing his lips together, he said in a low, agitated, but resolved tone, “Take me to her instantly!” As he spoke, he took Caroline’s hand, and drawing it within his arm, moved hastily towards the door. All the way along the passage and up-stairs he continued to hold her hand, pressing it convulsively, as if he sought, but would not ask for, pity and sympathy. She could feel too that his trembled far more violently than her own. After all, then, this man had feeling of some kind, though of what kind Caroline could not guess. His heart was to her an unfathomable mystery.

They were now at the door of Violet’s chamber. Sir Arthur paused for a moment, then suddenly but softly opened it. The curtains of the bed were drawn

on the side nearest the door. On the other side were the doctor and Jervis. The window-curtains had been drawn back about an inch, and one ray of the bright morning sunshine shone into the room, seeming to make all round darker by contrast. An unearthly stillness pervaded the apartment. For a moment, Caroline thought Violet must be dead, and as her eye caught that of Sir Arthur she saw the same dread expressed there, while his face became actually livid. They both stood still in breathless suspense. At last a low moan, as if of extreme pain, was heard to proceed from the bed. Sir Arthur started. The slight movement seemed to have attracted the attention of the dying woman.

“Is it you, Caroline?” she asked.

“Yes, my dearest.”

“And he will not come?” she said in a voice of despair.

“I am here, Violet!” he answered,—drawing back for a second with a brief, involuntary gesture of dread; and then presenting himself before her. She was sitting up with her arms stretched out her face perfectly bloodless, her features

set in death, and her eyes staring round wildly and eagerly. He saw at a glance that all hope of her life was over.

“Arthur!” she cried, “Arthur! Oh, Arthur!”

Even at this moment it was the one cry of her poor passion-stricken soul. It was a piteous sight to see how, even in the awful moment of death, the one feeling swallowed up all others.

There are few, very few hearts, so utterly callous that at some moment of their existence they do not experience the feelings proper to our nature, which, though fallen, is full of traces of its original nobility. Such a moment had now arrived to that of Arthur Cornish. Through the thick hard rind of pride, worldliness and selfishness, fostered, if not created, by education, unrestrained indulgence and unbroken worldly prosperity, penetrated now one quick sharp stroke of the deadliest of all human feelings—remorse. For a moment it overcame every other, even that of pride—usually the strongest of all the passions where it exists as a passion,—and sinking on a chair by the bed, he whispered ;

“Forgive me!” The moment after, he looked round upon the rest with haughty defiance, as if daring them to have overheard his words, or if they had, to believe that their meaning was intended for them. But these two words seemed to have wrought a miracle upon Lady Cornish. Athwart her face, on which death had stamped his pale, stern image, shot a glance of the wildest joy, while the tearless anguish of her eyes, as she turned them upon her husband, softened into a look of adoration.

“I love you!” she said. “Oh! do not hate me, Arthur. Love me for but one short hour, and I shall die happy. I know I have not been a good wife, but had I loved you less I might have been a better.”

Her husband only replied by taking her in his arms, and, bending over her, he whispered; “It was my fault, but I love you, Violet. I have always in my soul loved you better than any other woman. At this moment all others are utterly distasteful to me. My wife! you shall not die. We shall yet go back to Harbury and be happy together.”

Go back to Harbury! If anything could have recalled the dying woman to life, this would.

“Harbury!” she exclaimed; “but no, no! this is bliss enough for me—to die in your arms, with my head on your bosom, and your voice in my ears, Arthur! Arthur! this is happiness for me. I feel no pain now.”

Then after a pause, during which her upraised eyes were fixed intently on his face, which was bent anxiously over her, she continued,—

“Tell me that you do not love her!—that you——”

“I love only you, Violet, I swear!—and if you mean Angela Cayley, I dislike and despise her. I will never see her again, I assure you. She has no true woman’s heart. She is incapable of love. But you shall live to see it;” he added, with the haughty determination of tone with which he was accustomed to bend others to his will, and with which it would seem as if he expected to control even the Invincible himself.

She answered only by a slight melancholy smile, which was yet full of unspeak-

able tenderness. Then, after a few minutes silence, during which she seemed to be in great physical pain, she said, in a weak voice—"I have some requests to make. Will you grant them?"

"I swear it!"

"Give, then, to Eglantine Barwell, five thousand pounds, in addition to what I have already settled upon her out of my fortune. Give all my jewels to Caroline Irvine, except this ring, your first gift to me—keep that for yourself, and any other ring my brother George may please to select for himself. Give Jervis five hundred pounds, and my desk to Doctor——. And now, farewell to all. Kiss me, Caroline, my true friend. Give my love to poor George. And now the rest of my time with you, my——"

Here Violet suddenly put her hand to her heart, writhing as if in violent pain. The struggle seemed tremendous, and every muscle was contorted with the most violent convulsions. With strength which seemed almost superhuman, Sir Arthur, by a haughty gesture declining all assistance, held her firmly himself. His face was pale, stern, and haughty, and his lips

bloodless, while his eyes flashed a strange passionate defiance. New and violent emotions swelled that proud heart. For months past he had forced himself, in spite of his understanding, to disbelieve that any cause for alarm existed in the state of Violet's health; but now doubt and hope were equally impossible. She was about to die in the flower of her youth—a victim to her love for him, and to his cruelty. And the world, he knew, would say so. With all his real contempt for his race, his low opinion of the value of their suffrages, and the haughty disdain of his manner, few persons were more sensitive than Sir Arthur Cornish to public praise or censure. But mingled with this dread of the world's blame was another emotion—perhaps the least unselfish this man had ever felt in his life. As he now held his wife in his arms, writhing in mortal agony, there came back upon his memory the day when he had first clasped her to his heart in the bloom of her beauty and girlhood,—or that other day when, after years of estrangement, he had at last pressed his lips to those of his beautiful, pale bride. And now—the contrast moved

to something like sorrow even the heart of this bad man. In his present frame of mind Sir Arthur Cornish could have wept; but he would have died rather than any then present should have seen a tear in his eye. He continued to whisper expressions of tenderness into the ear of his dying wife, while she turned upon him looks far beyond words.

Meanwhile, Caroline, after having received her friend's last kiss, had withdrawn to some distance. Never before had she felt so unhappy. Shocked and distressed as she was by the events of the night, profoundly as she felt the wretchedness of Violet's fate, it was not merely for these reasons she was so perfectly miserable. There was something appalling to her feelings in this death-bed scene, in which the ideas of God and eternity, of sin, retribution, and salvation seemed to have no place, and for the present the feeling of horror she experienced swallowed up all other emotions. She could not have believed it, had she not seen it, that even on the verge of eternity, a human passion could thus have triumphed over every emotion proper to the time. It was a

fearful sight—a fearful thought to reflect that in a few brief minutes this spirit should be in the dread presence of its offended Lord, whose love to the very last it had wilfully slighted. And poor Caroline, bewildered with distress and terror, could only pray — “Oh, God, help her! Oh, merciful Saviour, keep us all in the knowledge and love of Thee for ever!”

At last the awful struggle ceased, and Lady Cornish lay still and exhausted in the arms of her husband. Her eyes were fixed on his—her lips still moved; but the only words she uttered were—“My love!—mine—mine at last—mine!”

In the state of perfect exhaustion in which she now was, this seemed the only idea she had left—the only thought which bound her to existence. But the interval of repose was brief. Hardly two minutes had elapsed ere the struggle came again. And this time it was the last. In a paroxysm of pain, but with her dying eyes fixed steadfastly on her husband’s, and her husband’s hand in her dying grasp, Violet Cornish breathed her last!

Sir Arthur held her still for some minutes in his arms, then laying her gently

down, he closed her eyes. "She is dead!" he said, in a hoarse, stern tone, but betraying no other symptom of emotion save what might have been conveyed by his pale countenance, and the fixed expression of his proud dark eyes. Then turning to Caroline, he continued,—

"This has been a sad night for you, Miss Irvine. You had better try to obtain a little rest. Jervis, send for Lady Harriet, as soon as possible. Doctor —— I am much obliged by your attention to Lady Cornish. Will you take any refreshment?—breakfast, perhaps?"

Doctor —— declined, and immediately took leave. Jervis, who was weeping bitterly, left the room to obey her master's orders, and Caroline withdrew to her own apartment.

Sir Arthur remained alone in the chamber of his dead wife. As soon as they were all gone, he threw himself down beside the soulless form of his once-loved Violet, and kissing passionately the face and hands, which were still warm, burst into tears. He walked up and down the room, chafing at the turn events had taken, and then returned to throw himself

down again, in unavailing angry regret, by the body of his wife. But though he felt remorse, sorrow, and even tenderness towards the departed, he dropped not one tear of true repentance—he made not one resolution of future amendment. His heart was as proud as ever. At last there was a pause in the passionate emotion he had at first manifested. He sat motionless by the side of the dead, holding the lifeless hand in his, but with his face averted. He had continued thus for some time in a gloomy reverie, when suddenly, and as if some recollection of more than ordinary pungency had struck him, he started up, and hastily quitted the room, locking the door, and carrying the key away with him. He then strode rapidly down-stairs towards the writing-room, where Caroline had found him. Shutting and bolting the door, he drew the half-written letter from underneath the blotting-paper he had thrown over it. At the top of the page were written the words—“My beloved Angela.” He hesitated for a moment, as if doubting whether or not he should read it,—but at last he did so. As he read, his lip curled with the sneer

it sometimes wore, and which seemed its most natural expression, while, as he finished, his eye flashed scornfully,—

“ I will never see this woman more,” he muttered ; “ and even thus I shall gain the victory.”

As he spoke, he tore the letter into pieces, and striking a light, deliberately burnt them one by one.

CHAPTER VIII.

As soon as Caroline had reached her own room, she had thrown herself upon her bed in a state of depression impossible to be described. She seemed as if possessed of a passion of sadness. She felt as if nothing could ever make her happy again. She had, however, one thought full of comfort; and as the storm-tossed mariner looks to the beacon which tells him of harbour and safety, so she now strove to look to the Heavenly Star which, to the eye of faith, ever shines serenely in the midst of the darkest tempest, touching with a holy radiance the wildest surges which rage in the sea of life.

“All is from God, and therefore must be good.” To this faith she clung, and in it, at last, her worn-out spirit found

rest. At last she fell into the slumber of exhaustion.

It was late in the day ere she awoke. So sound had her sleep been, that, for some time, she could not remember distinctly the occurrences of the past night. She had merely an impression, which amounted, however, to certainty, that something terrible had happened. The sight of Jervis, who, after knocking, entered her room, recalled the whole, and she burst into tears—the first she had been able to shed since Violet's death. It was a great relief to her to be able to weep: the sight of Jervis, too, who likewise wept bitterly, seemed to do her good. She felt that she was not so utterly alone. It was some seconds ere she observed that the waiting-woman carried two notes on a salver.

"They are for you, Miss," she said; "one came by this morning's post, and the other I got from my master, who ordered me to deliver it to you immediately."

Caroline hastily seized Sir Arthur's, wondering what could possibly be its contents, and read it without looking at the

other, which she imagined might be an invitation, or something of equally trifling importance. Having heard from home the previous day, she knew the letter could not be from Edinburgh, and she was not much interested in correspondence from any other quarter. Sir Arthur's note was as follows :

“ My dear Miss Irvine,—I am anxious to know how you are this morning, and shall feel obliged if you will send a message by Jervis to inform me. I have a great favour to beg of you, which I entreat you to grant, for the sake of the departed, and the friendship which subsisted between you and her. Will you remain here till after the funeral? I desire it earnestly, and I am sure she would have wished it. Lady Harriet has just arrived, and unites with me in this petition. I have just written to Major Smythe.

“ With the greatest esteem,

“ I am ever, yours faithfully,

“ ARTHUR CORNISH.”

For a few seconds Caroline hesitated about remaining another week—it was so

very repugnant to her feelings. A few minutes' reflection, however, convinced her of the propriety of the plan. She felt that it was best for all parties, and that, as Sir Arthur said, it was what Violet would have wished. She felt that for the sake of the departed, it was best to preserve an appearance of friendliness with her husband. The world she knew would talk as it was, but it would talk more if she left Sir Arthur's house while his wife and her friend yet lay unburied. She, therefore, desired Jervis to give her compliments to Sir Arthur, and to say that she was too much fatigued to be able to see Lady Harriet then, but that she should be happy to remain with her ladyship for a few days.

Having given this message, she would have lain down again, when Jervis reminded her of the other note. She took it languidly from the salver, but started and trembled when she saw that the address was in the handwriting of Malcolm Gordon. She held it in her hand, not venturing to open it till Jervis had left the room; and when she was gone, and the letter open, she was so agitated

she could hardly read it. Malcolm wrote :

“ My dear Caroline,—I write to apologise for my unkind conduct to you last night. I have no excuse to make, except that I was suffering from a heavy and sudden disappointment which I fear had ruffled my temper. To your sweet temper, and to the kind friendship you have always shown me, I trust for forgiveness, and I hope you will not now withdraw from me your sisterly regard. I start this afternoon. Will you write me one line before I go. May you be happy, dear Caroline! You have my warmest wishes for your welfare. May God bless you for ever!

“ Your affectionate Brother,

“ MALCOLM GORDON.”

Caroline pressed the letter to her lips. It made her for the moment almost happy to find that she had not offended Malcolm. After one moment of joy, she reproached herself for the selfish emotion at such a time—when Malcolm, too, was suffering from a “ heavy and sudden disappointment.” What could this disappointment

be?—and why had he not told her? Though he was not, as she had feared, angry or offended, still he was not the same. In India, far separate from her, he had kept nothing from her; now, when they were together, he had some cause of distress for which he would not seek her sympathy. He still persevered, too, in his resolution of setting off to Scotland without seeing her again. She kept on puzzling over his motives, till at last she remembered she must waste no time, in order that her answer might arrive before Malcolm should set off upon his journey.

It was a painful task to be obliged to communicate the death of Lady Cornish. She could not enter into the details, but, as gently as possible, stated the sad event.

She then continued, “At Sir Arthur’s earnest request, I have consented to remain here with Lady Harriet until after my poor friend is buried. I shall then return to Scotland immediately, and I cannot tell you how glad I shall be to feel myself at home once more. I wish I could have gone with you, as I dread the long solitary journey. Tell papa and

Agnes that you left me well; I am grieved that you are in distress, but very glad to find that you are not offended with me. Indeed, I did not see how I could have displeased you, and it is a great comfort to me, amid all the wretchedness of this morning, to find that I have not lost your friendship. I suppose we shall meet at Locharroch in the autumn. Do not speak of forgiveness, dear Malcolm. I am only sorry you should suffer. Excuse all that is amiss in this scrawl, for my hand shakes so; and my eyes are so heavy and swollen, I am hardly able to see or, to hold the pen.

“ Believe me, always,

“ Your affectionate Sister,

“ C. I.”

As soon as Caroline had finished this note, and dispatched it, she dressed and went down to the drawing-room, where she had been told she should find Lady Harriet. It was with a feeling of the deepest sadness that she traversed the long gallery and staircase which divided her from the drawing-room. There seemed

to be a strange, dreamy desolation about every object. A supernatural stillness seemed to pervade the atmosphere. Even the brightness of the summer sunshine appeared to be tinged with melancholy.

As Caroline entered the drawing-room, a thousand feelings and recollections crowded on her memory. How empty and silent now seemed those apartments which the night before had been so crowded and so brilliant! Suddenly she seemed to see the figure of Violet in her lace robes and sparkling jewels, as she had stood under the chandelier, and then she thought of her now lying stiff, and cold, and silent for ever. Her eyes filled with tears, and it was some seconds ere she could find voice to accost Lady Harriet.

The latter was seated on a sofa in a graceful attitude of distress, with a scented handkerchief of the finest cambric held to her face, so as to display the symmetry of her white hand, and the brilliancy of her diamond and emerald rings. She rose on Caroline's approach, and then sank back again, as if quite overwhelmed.

"A sad, sad affliction," she said, in a

tone and with a manner which, though good acting, Caroline felt instinctively convinced was only acting; "no sadder bereavement than that of a mother of her only daughter, and our poor departed angel was as a cherished daughter to me. My sole consolation is in this book," continued Lady Harriet, pointing to a Bible which lay upon a small table beside her, but which she had *not* been reading. "What is this world, my dear young friend? What are youth, and beauty, and love, but frail perishing flowers? And such a blow to Arthur. There never were a more attached couple than he and dear Violet; but happiness such as theirs, in this world of mourning, can be but brief. Ah! my dear Miss Irvine, we had all much need of the consolation of knowing there is a better land, where we shall meet to part no more. And now let me thank you for your goodness in remaining to comfort me in this sad bereavement. I truly stand much in need of comfort." Here Lady Harriet raised her embroidered pocket-handkerchief to her eyes and remained silent for a few minutes, as if in speechless grief.

Had it been at any other time, Caroline might have been amused at this affectation of sorrow; but now it shocked and saddened her. It seemed as if it would be almost insupportable to pass a week in Lady Harriet's company. This perpetual heartless mockery of woe was almost more than she could bear. It made her feel at once indignant and depressed. As the day passed on it became worse. Her already excited and wearied nerves were harassed and agitated almost beyond endurance. She longed for something real. It seemed to her that one sincere word would be the greatest possible comfort to her. Even the loneliness she had before felt so irksome would have been a relief now. But it was in vain she wished; she was condemned to listen the livelong day to Lady Harriet's sentimental platitudes; for in addition to her other accomplishments this lady was a great talker. Sir Arthur did not appear at all during the day. His mother spoke of him as "Poor Arthur! he has the strongest feelings in the world; he is exactly like myself. When his mind is occupied with one overwhelming sorrow, no minor objects of interest have power to

divert his thoughts for a moment. Such also are exactly my feelings; all employments and amusements are utterly distasteful to me. I can do nothing but deplore the loss of my beloved daughter. I feel as if I could never do anything else, or never be happy again. To-morrow we must send to some shops for mourning; we must not neglect any duty to the dear departed. I have no doubt Arthur will have a magnificent funeral. He will spare no trouble or expense to show his love and respect for poor Lady Cornish. Arthur has a princely spirit; and, by-the-bye, my dear, talking of mourning, you must tell me to-morrow whether you think white would be becoming under my bonnet. You know one must wear very deep mourning for a week or two, and I have implicit reliance on your artistic taste. I have been thinking so much lately about your pictures," continued Lady Harriet, who just then remembered that Caroline was an artist, the fact having hitherto so entirely escaped her memory that she had not once thought of it since Violet had told her. "I shall speak about you to my friends: you paint miniatures, I believe?"

"No, landscapes in water-colours."

"Ah, yes! to be sure, landscapes in water-colours I meant to say. I was thinking of another young friend who paints miniatures beautifully. I wished her to have done one of our departed angel. The only likeness we have of her is in the portrait-gallery at Harbury. Ah, my dear Miss Irvine! this is a sad and changeful world." And again Lady Harriet had recourse to her pocket-handkerchief.

As the day passed on Lady Harriet seemed to become weary *of* her grief, not *with* it. She made a very good dinner, and after that meal was over, and candles were lighted, she proposed a game at *écarté*. Caroline replied that she could not play.

"But I shall be delighted to teach you. I am sure you will make an apt learner, you are so very quick and clever at everything." And Lady Harriet suppressed a yawn. But Caroline declined. She was not to be flattered into compliance. It was bad enough to be obliged to sit and seem to listen while Lady Harriet spoke. To command her attention to learn a game

of cards—a sort of amusement always irksome to her—was out of the question. Lady Harriet, smothering another yawn, began to wander about the room as if she did not know what to do with herself. At last she alighted upon a French novel of poor Violet's, and, as if greatly relieved, returned with it to the sofa. Glad to be spared for awhile the fatigue of listening and answering, Caroline leaned back in her chair to enjoy the comparative repose. She then began to read the Bible—that volume so much cherished by Lady Harriet; but which Caroline had never once seen her open—and sought to obtain comfort there for her weary heart. She had hardly, however, begun to read, when the footman came to announce to her that Major Smythe was in the breakfast-room, and earnestly requested her to see him for a few minutes. Caroline could not refuse such a request at such a time. She hastened to the breakfast-room, anxious to get over the painful interview.

The breakfast-room was lighted by only one candle, so that, except near the table on which it stood, the room was in deep shadow. As Caroline entered she did not

at first see George Smythe ; but he started up from a chair in one of the dim corners and advanced a step or two into the light. Still she could not see his countenance. Caroline held out her hand—he took it between both of his, and pressing it to his lips, he burst into tears. For some seconds neither could do anything but weep. George Smythe's frame actually shook with emotion, and he sobbed aloud. At last he said—"I did not think I should have been so overcome ; but I have been out of town all the morning ; it is not half an hour since I heard—oh, my poor sister !" This was the truest and most natural grief Caroline had yet seen, and she was deeply moved by it. She entreated him to sit down, and tried to comfort him—not with common-place truisms, but with genuine sympathy. At last he said, "Tell me all about it—I am anxious to know—and I could not bear to hear it from any one but yourself."

Caroline complied with his request, though, during the course of her narrative, her voice was frequently broken by weeping. As at first she had not been able to shed tears, now she could hardly

restrain them. Worn out by fatigue and distress, she was on the verge of becoming hysterical. George Smythe on the contrary became calmer during the progress of her sad tale. He listened to her account of Sir Arthur's behaviour without making any remark, though Caroline fancied she heard him grind his teeth, and even mutter, "Heartless scoundrel!" She told him also of the determination to which she had come, to remain till after the funeral, and of the reasons which had induced her to do so.

"You are right, Caroline," he said, as she concluded,—“right, as you always are; I thank you for your kind consideration, and, following your example, I shall not quarrel with Sir Arthur Cornish; but after the remains of my sister are removed from his house, I shall never enter it again,—for I know he has killed her! And now Caroline, I must see her once more. Will you show me where she is laid?”

Caroline felt that the wish was natural; and hastily writing a request to Sir Arthur for the key of the room where poor Violet lay, she rang the bell for a servant and despatched it by him. The man was not

long in returning with the key and his master's compliments to Miss Irvine, and he would feel obliged by her sending it back as soon as she was done with it. Caroline then gave it to Major Smythe, saying,—

“I will, if you please, wait here till you return.”

“Will you not go with me, Caroline? It is a sad, trying scene that I have got before me, and I have no one in this wide world but yourself to whom I can apply for sympathy.”

Caroline hesitated.

“Should not you go with any one under such circumstances, Miss Irvine?” he said with a slight hoarseness of tone, and looking a little hurt, —“any one but myself?”

“Let us go,” said Caroline, and she took the arm he now offered, blushing deeply. It seemed to her that she had been wrong in even having seemed to hesitate. At such a time she ought only to have remembered that George Smythe was a fellow-creature and a friend in distress. She had wronged him by supposing that he could have any other

thought at such a time, and she felt ashamed that he should have perceived what her ideas had been. How unkind and ungenerous she must have seemed! By an unusual frankness and kindness she now tried to show him how entire was her confidence that he would not misinterpret her conduct.

Poor Caroline! although on the darker side of twenty-five, she was still in many things as simple-minded and child-like as ever. Hers was the invincible simplicity of a noble and ingenuous temper. She judged others by herself—not all others, of course,—not the Lady Harriets or the Mrs. Purveses, or the Sir Arthur Cornishes of her acquaintance,—but all who, like George Smythe, appeared to partake of a better nature. And, in truth, George Smythe not only appeared, but really did partake of a better nature than the ordinary run of worldlings, to whatsoever class they may belong—to the coarse vulgar, like Mrs. Purves, or to the varnished vulgar, like Lady Harriet. But his nature was not like that of Caroline. Though capable of appreciating both refinement and generosity to a certain extent, and though,

in the world's strictest sense of the term, a man of honour, he was far from possessing the high-wrought feelings of delicacy which Caroline had attributed to him. Even amid all his grief for his sister's death,—and that was genuine and even passionate,—he had not for one moment foregone, either in thought or deed, what was now the chief object of his life; and as Caroline leant on his arm, and spoke in the soft, affectionate tone which was the natural expression of her sorrow and sympathy, he misinterpreted her motives because he was unable to appreciate that magnanimous benevolence and tenderness which, without object or personal interest of its own, seeks only to comfort and bless, or that generosity and nobleness which consists in believing in the nobleness and generosity of others.

“She must like me, or she would not be so kind.”

George and Caroline were now at the door of Lady Cornish's chamber. The former paused for a second; and Caroline could see, as the light of the candle he carried fell upon his face, that he was very pale. They entered the room in perfect

silence. Quitting his arm, Caroline sat down near the door, while he, passing round the bed, gently drew aside the curtain and gazed for the last time on the face of his only sister. She was so changed that he would not have known her. Inexpressibly shocked, he stood perfectly still for some seconds. Then, stooping down, he kissed the clay-cold lips and brow, and the eyelids now closed for ever.

George and Violet, unlike as they were in many respects, had never shown for each other that fondness which is frequently to be observed between an orphan brother and sister who have no other tie of kindred. Yet there had always subsisted between them a true affection—an affection which had been perhaps stronger on the side of the former, as, till he had become acquainted with Caroline, it was the only real and pure affection he had ever felt, while the mind of the latter had been for years absorbed by one violent passion. And now, as he felt that there was not one being on earth on whose sympathy he had a claim, mingled emotions of desolation and anger took possession of his soul. Kneeling down by the bed, he

buried his face in his hands, and thus remained for some minutes. Never during the whole course of his life before had George Smythe felt so deeply. He was impressed with the awfulness of life; and while his heart sickened with amazement as he suddenly became aware of the emptiness, the weariness, and the wickedness of the life around him, it yearned more and more for the peace and the truth and the holiness which it seemed to him could be found in domestic affection alone.

Rising at last, he again gave his arm to Caroline, and with the same silence in which they had entered the room, they now quitted it. Strange though it may seem, those few moments of right and sincere feeling had altered his views of Caroline's conduct. He now read her motives more truly, and his heart was penetrated by her generosity, and filled with the tenderest love towards her. Oh! should he ever gain her? No one, he was convinced, could ever love her as he loved her. This change in his sentiments will not appear unnatural to those who know the power possessed by one great

and unselfish emotion in enlightening the *feelings*.

And now they were again in the breakfast-parlour, and he felt that he must take leave.

"I must go," he said; "yet, oh! Caroline, if you could only guess my feelings this wretched night you would pity me."

"I do—I do truly."

"In leaving you, I leave all I have now on earth. Caroline! Caroline!" he continued, over-mastered by a sudden impulse; and, as she turned to quit the room, seizing hold of her dress to detain her, "forgive me, I did not intend thus to have given way,—cannot you console me with one word of hope?"

As he spoke, he burst into tears.

"Oh, Caroline!—my all! surely you will not utterly reject me—surely you will give me one ray of comfort. Oh! pardon me for being so selfish as to think of my own happiness now; but I am going to solitude, and no one can give me a ray of comfort but yourself."

Caroline was much moved, and the more so that it was evident that George

Smythe had not taken this opportunity of set purpose to urge his suit, but spoke absolutely and without his own consent, from the fulness of a heart which could not contain the feelings with which it was surcharged. Never had she been so tempted by a compassionate impulse; but—Malcolm—Malcolm—this was the thought which withheld her from yielding to it. Cruel though it seemed, duty commanded her to crush for ever the hope which was the sole comfort of the bereaved and lonely heart which had thus appealed to her compassion. Nerving herself for the painful task, and with pale, quivering lips, which showed how painful she felt it, she answered—

“I cannot express to you how I feel for you. I wish that I could comfort you; but, indeed, I cannot otherwise than as a friend. Major Smythe, my conscience will not permit me to mislead you. I can never love you. O would that you had never thought of me, as I must add to your grief!”

“Is it quite impossible?” he asked, in a tone whose calmness was more painful to Caroline than the loudest sorrow.

“Quite.”

There was a moment's silence.

It was broken by George Smythe.

“You love another man.”

She started and coloured,—and then hurriedly cried, “I never said so!”

“No; I wish you had. You told me, indeed, that you had once loved; but you led me to suppose that you loved no longer.”

“I thought so, truly. But Major Smythe, do me justice; I have never for a moment led you to believe I loved you.”

“No, no; never! You are an angel; pardon me, it was but the bitterness of my grief,—you cannot guess its bitterness.”

“Cannot I?” she exclaimed; “Oh! I——” then suddenly checking herself, she added, “Believe me, I feel for you. Believe me, oh! believe me, I would have suffered much ere this should have happened. I should rather have done anything than wound you at such a time.”

As Caroline spoke, she burst into tears, and wept hysterically. The accumulated distress, excitement, and fatigue of the

last twenty-four hours had quite overcome her.

George Smythe was deeply touched. Still influenced by the feelings which had arisen in the chamber of his dead sister, the more generous impulses of his nature acted freely. At that moment he felt capable of making any sacrifice; and we must remember, that sacrifice of feeling, though not so obvious, is, in truth, as great, if not greater, than any other sacrifice. Kneeling beside her, he took her hand: "Do not weep, dear, noble-hearted Caroline. Surely you, too, are not unhappy?"

"No, no, I ought not to be. I am not alone,—I have my father and sister. Oh! forgive me, Major Smythe, I seem so selfish in my own eyes. It seems as if I could think of nobody's unhappiness but my own."

"Your own unhappiness! Caroline, do you, then, as I have suspected, love this Mr. Gordon? Your secret is safe with me."

Caroline faintly breathed a "Yes."

It seemed to her that she might thus best destroy all hope in the heart of

George Smythe,—whom, though more convinced than ever that she could not love, she had never liked so well as now.

He groaned. “And is your attachment not returned?”

“No.” Then drying her tears, and recovering her self-possession, she continued: “I hardly know whether I am right or not, but I have made up my mind to tell you all, that you may know, that when I said I believed I had ceased to love, I did not deceive you. Yes, I think it better you should know all, and I am certain you will not—yet why should I be ashamed of loving what is worthy of love?”

As Caroline spoke, she blushed crimson even over her neck and arms, yet her glance was open and frank, as becomes those who are conscious of the truth and purity of their own motives.

George Smythe replied, “Thank you, Miss Irvine; your confidence is not misplaced; and I am certain I can hear nothing from you that will not be to your honour.”

Thus encouraged, Caroline began her

narrative. At first she felt nervous, and hesitated, but as she proceeded she gained courage, and spoke with greater confidence and perspicuity. Omitting as much as possible all that did not relate to herself, she merely mentioned Malcolm's attachment to another woman, and stated in general terms, that it had been unfortunate.

As soon as she finished, George Smythe answered. "I thank you most sincerely for your confidence. What you have told me only confirms my opinion of your excellence,—raise it, it could not. It also makes me think well of—of—"

He seemed as if he were choking; but making an effort, continued :

"One thing you have not told me,—I mean the name of the lady whom Mr. Gordon loved. I do not ask from idle curiosity. Was it—it was not my——"

"Yes, it was Violet."

For a minute he was silent, then said slowly, "Now I know it, and see it all. Though she never told me his name, I have heard all this from Violet. Caroline, he is worthy of you; more I cannot say."

Caroline only answered by a sigh.

George Smythe's voice became firm as he spoke. "And now farewell hope. Caroline, from your example I shall try to learn to endure disappointment; and if I succeed, you will not think the worse of me. Perhaps the time may come, when I shall be able to see you with safety to my own peace of mind. Meanwhile, perhaps, you will permit me to write to you occasionally. Will you, kind, excellent Miss Irvine; my poor Violet's best friend?"

Caroline could not do otherwise than grant his request.

For a second or two, George Smythe held her hand. His eyes were fixed on her face with an expression of pain, which sent the tears to hers to behold.

This mutual glance was the sole farewell which passed between them.

George Smythe ran quickly down-stairs and out of the house, but as soon as he was in the open air he slackened his pace. It seemed as if he could not hasten from the house which contained all he loved.

It was a clear summer night, and the stars shone softly down on the great London world. Perhaps, amid all the

crowd which thronged the streets of the metropolis, there was that night no sadder, more desolate heart than that of George Smythe. The feeling of generous excitement which had upheld him during part of his painful interview with Caroline, had now given place to the most complete prostration of spirit. Violet,—Caroline,—to him both equally lost. Such were the ideas ever present to his thoughts.

Meanwhile, Caroline had returned to the drawing-room. On arriving there, she was greatly relieved to find that Lady Harriet had retired to rest. She had just rung for a bedroom candle, when she perceived a note, addressed to herself, lying on the table. The address was in Malcolm's hand-writing, and she hastily tore it open, and read :

“ My dear Caroline,—I am inexpressibly shocked and grieved by the contents of your last note. Poor, poor Violet! And yourself, too, my dear Caroline. Pray write me one line, to let me know how you are. You say you dread the solitary journey ; if my escort is of any consequence to you, I shall most willingly remain in London till you are ready to

go. At all times remember I am ready to do anything that can in any way add to your pleasure and comfort. I have written to Catherine to defer my arrival at least for a day or two. Take care of yourself, my dear friend, and think how it would distress your father and sister to see you looking ill. Let me hear from you to-morrow.

“Your affectionate Brother,

“MALCOLM GORDON.”

With this letter under her pillow, Caroline fell asleep.

CHAPTER IX.

NOTHING could well exceed the tediousness of the time which intervened between the day of Lady Cornish's death and that of her funeral. Sad though it might have seemed to be alone under such circumstances, Caroline would infinitely have preferred solitude to the society of Lady Harriet. The latter seemed devoured by *ennui*. Occasionally she sought relief from its pains in writing letters to various friends, in which she particularly described her own sufferings, and moralised on the uncertainty of life, and the great necessity for not becoming too much attached to its fleeting pleasures ; enlarging on the comfort she felt in religion, and in the certainty of meeting her beloved daughter in a world where friends "meet to part

no more," She expressed herself to be longing for that time, and to be weary of the world ; concluding by assuring her correspondents, if it were not for her duty to her son and society, she would follow the bent of her inclination, and withdraw into the seclusion she so much loved. In the same strain, too, she spoke to the one or two intimate friends whom, after the second day, she prevailed upon herself to see during a morning visit. These visitors were always received by her in an elegant, dejected attitude, and she always spoke in a sentimental whisper. One incessant subject of lamentation with her was, that she had not seen "her dear departed daughter before she quitted this world of sorrow and pain. And my beloved Violet herself regretted it so much upon her death-bed. It embittered the last hours of my sweet daughter. Think how sad for me." And then Lady Harriet would bury her face in her pocket-handkerchief.

The first time Caroline heard this romance, she was perfectly thunderstruck, knowing that Lady Harriet must be aware that she at least knew that there was not

one word of truth in it. But a few days of close association with her ladyship, convinced her that not only was the latter totally devoid of any preference for truth over falsehood, but that she was quite ignorant of the existence of a class of persons who had a sincere reverence for the latter. At first Caroline had, out of a feeling of politeness to Lady Harriet, remained in the drawing-room while she received her visitors; but finding that her ladyship never introduced her to any of them, and usually seemed to be forgetful of her presence, she afterwards took advantage of the opportunity to indulge in the relief of being alone. When she returned to the drawing-room, Lady Harriet generally received her with some such speech as the following :

“ Oh ! my dear Miss Irvine ! I am so glad you are come back. Your society is such a matter to me. I regret so excessively you were not in the room when dear Lady —— was here. She is a sweet, intellectual woman, and would have been so charmed to make your acquaintance. I regretted your absence the whole time. I was on the point of men-

tioning your miniatures to her, when she happened to allude to our dear departed, and you will excuse a mother's feelings."

Though sad at heart, it was with difficulty Caroline could refrain from laughing at such speeches as these. Had she not known Lady Harriet, she would have found some difficulty in believing that such a person existed; and unless you, my reader, have met such another, you will probably suppose that, in describing her, I have been guilty of exaggeration, which I can solemnly assure you I have not, as I have met more than one such during my progress through this world of unsubstantial appearances. It may be urged, too, in extenuation of her insincerity (if insincerity ever admits of extenuation), that nature had made her an actress, and given her a love of excitement which amounted to a mania. The chief pleasure of her life consisted in simulating those feelings which she never experienced in reality. Lady Harriet's mind was all surface. Many things might skim over it, but nothing could take root or abide in it. Nor had Lady Harriet ever, in all her life, been taught the difference between

right and wrong. She was as ignorant as if she had been a South-sea Islander, or one of the lowest or most degraded of the populace. It is a trite saying, that extremes meet — and many a drawing-room has as much need of a missionary as a gin-palace. The denizens of the one, though sunk perhaps in a more gross, are not immersed in a more fatal ignorance than those of the other; nor are their opportunities of moral advancement much fewer. Men and women are most assuredly not altogether the creatures of circumstances; yet, at the same time, not one of us can be certain what, under different circumstances, we might have become. It has been often urged, and in excuse for the vilest criminal, that the difference between him and the judge who condemns him, may be but a difference of circumstances. Far from denying this, I think that justice demands that the principles upon which it is based should be much more widely applied. Among a certain class of political moralists, it is the fashion to excuse the vices of the lower classes at the expense of those of the upper, combined with the more

difficult circumstances in which they are placed. Now the writer of these few passing remarks is no politician, but a poor student of that wonderful part of God's wonderful universe — the human heart; and it appears to her that the reasoning of these political moralists, though sometimes characterised by a certain generosity of motive, is equally false and unjust, unless they can prove that grandeur and riches have not temptations, as well as meanness and poverty. Have we not, rather, the highest authority for believing that their temptations are greater? For the most part, it is a different class of vices to which they lead; but if both classes are equally the product of circumstances, why is the one to be railed at and the other excused? Are selfishness and pride, and inhumanity, in truth, less pitiable than dishonesty and brutality? If moral and spiritual degradation be as melancholy as material privation — and surely no Christian will affirm that it is not?—a Lady Harriet is, perhaps, as much to be pitied as any unfortunate woman whom destitution has driven to crime.

True, the one receives the hollow honours of society, while the other is an outcast; but in the eye of Him whose regards stretch from time to eternity, the one is as much as the other an object of commiseration. If declaiming against the vices of the poor will not effect a reformation, neither will declaiming against those of the rich. *Scolding* in public life, as well as in private, is always worse than useless, and the true philanthropist and true Christian, while, according to his gift, he makes use of reproof, exhortation, and example, will temper all with the spirit of benevolence, and never cease to remember that high and low, rich and poor, have all one human heart, and are all, as classes, equally beset with temptations and trials, from which nothing but the grace of God, and its instrument—the charity and brotherly sympathy of one another—can ever deliver them.

At last the day of the funeral arrived, and, with all the pomp and circumstance of woe, amid a stately cavalcade of mourning-coaches, long-tailed black horses, waving plumes, and a procession which filled the street, the mortal remains of

Violet, Lady Cornish, were borne from her husband's house, and committed to the dust.

For the first time since his wife's death, Sir Arthur Cornish dined at table. He was haughty, reserved, and silent, but punctiliously polite, more especially to Caroline. After dinner, he requested to see her alone. He then led her to what had been his wife's boudoir. On the table stood a large box, of elegant workmanship. Laying his hand upon it, Sir Arthur said—

“ This box contains all the jewels, with the exception of two rings, which belonged to Lady Cornish. According to her wish they are now yours. Here is the key.”

Sir Arthur spoke in a cold, grave, firm tone, and Caroline could not perceive that a muscle of his countenance moved. After a momentary pause, he continued, in the same manner—

“ And now, I have only to add, Miss Irvine, my own thanks for the sincere friendship with which you have always honoured my wife. There is nothing which I desire more than to testify my sense of your kindness to her; but I know you

will receive nothing from me. Whatever I may think of the world and of women in general, whatever cause I may have had, or may have fancied I had, to consider you my enemy, I think of you only now as the friend of my wife, whom, whatever you may have supposed" (and he spoke with a defiant air), "I have always loved. I believe you have always truly wished and tried to promote her happiness. I leave town to-morrow, for Harbury. This may be the last time we shall ever meet. Let us part as friends."

He held out his hand; for a moment Caroline hesitated. But brief as her hesitation was, it was noticed by Sir Arthur.

"As you please," he said haughtily; but all his pride could not conceal from Caroline the pang of remorse which for a second contracted his brow, and made his frame shrink as with a sudden spasm.

Sorry for him, in spite of all his selfishness, she quickly held out her hand. He read her motives at a glance, and, for a moment, angry that any one should have seen his suffering, or dared to pity him, his proud, resentful spirit struggled with

the admiration to which he felt himself compelled. But for once in his life the more generous impulse triumphed.

"Farewell," he said; "I believe you have a noble heart."

They then parted, and have never since met.

Although Malcolm had remained in London for the purpose of accompanying Caroline to Scotland, she had not once seen him since Violet's death. He had called once at the door to inquire for her, and on his card being given to her, she had desired the servant to show him up the next time he came; but, much to her disappointment, he had never come again. He had, however, written her various notes, but though very kind, they contained mere inquiries after her health, or proposed arrangements for their journey home. Each note, as it came, produced in Caroline a feeling of disappointment, the cause of which she found it difficult to analyse. Malcolm was not the same he used to be, and yet, what good reason had she to suppose he was less her friend than he had always been.

He had never been her lover. Oh, poor, foolish Caroline!

It was a beautiful morning in June on which Caroline left London—her heart at once sad and glad, sad as she thought of poor Violet, and glad as she remembered she was going home. She breakfasted alone,—for, as the train started at half-past nine, it was, of course, too early for Lady Harriet to think of rising. She sent her maid, however, with a message; “Her love to Miss Irvine, and she wished her a very pleasant journey. She felt so unwell this morning, the terrible shock her feelings had sustained had so affected her health, that she knew Miss Irvine would excuse her making her appearance. She did not feel equal to a farewell scene.”

Thus poor Caroline took her last meal in London in perfect solitude. She was to meet Malcolm at the railway station, and, accordingly, as the carriage drove up, he was at the door to hand her out. He was looking grave.

“What—Caroline!” he cried, as he handed her out. “Alone!” and for a

second an expression of pleasure lighted up his countenance.

"Yes," she answered, "quite alone and glad, oh, how glad, at the idea that I am going home!"

Caroline had hardly finished speaking when a cab drove quickly up, and she was surprised to see jump down from it one of the servants of Sir Arthur Cornish. He instantly accosted her:—

"A letter for you, Miss, which Major Smythe's servant brought from his master in a great hurry. I took a cab immediately, Miss, as I was afraid you might be gone."

Having thanked the man, and given him the expected *douceur*, Caroline opened the note. It contained merely a few lines to bid her farewell, and a renewal of his request to be permitted to write to her occasionally. Caroline had not remarked the change in Malcolm's expression as she had received the note, but it struck her there was something peremptory in his tone, as he said, "Come, Caroline, the train will be gone if we do not secure our places."

It seemed to her that he was angry or

displeased. How impatient he had become! his temper was certainly not nearly so good as it used to be. Even Malcolm had not been proof against the habits of impatience and imperiousness, apt to be produced by a warm climate and the implicit obedience of a number of dependants. Caroline was vexed on his account, rather than angry on her own; but, remembering that he had told her that he had met with a sudden and heavy disappointment, she fancied this might be the cause of his unwonted irritability.

"Pardon me," she said, gently; "but I was not aware it was so late."

"Nay, pardon me," he answered, "for being so cross."

She looked at him and smiled kindly. He turned away his head as he met her glance; hers was too kind to be endurable. They were now in the carriage. Malcolm leaned back in his seat, grave and silent. Caroline looked out upon the hurry and the bustle of porters, wheelbarrows, cabs, carriages, passengers, and friends, bidding adieu to their parting friends, as one who saw it not. She was thinking of the night of her arrival, and

of all the changes and events which had been crowded into the last two months. At last the bell rang, the whistle sounded loud and shrill, and away darted the long train with its freight of human souls. An epitome of this life! the noblest and the meanest—the wisest and the most foolish—the saddest and the merriest—all for a brief space sharing one common destiny. A train leaving London! surely, commonplace as such an event seems, there are few things more interesting. If we could read the secrets of each heart it contains, or even its feelings, on bidding adieu to the great city, what a revelation it would be!

Malcolm and Caroline had a carriage entirely to themselves. They had travelled considerably more than an hour ere either spoke. At last Caroline, by way of interrupting the strange silence, and with the hope of diverting Malcolm's thoughts, as well as her own, from painful subjects, said to her companion:—

“You will at Locharroch to-morrow night. How beautiful it will be looking now, and how glad you will be to see it again, and Ardenнан, your own now.”

"I am not certain that I shall be so glad," he answered gravely.

"I thought you had written to me"—began Caroline.

"My wishes and feelings are changed in many respects," he interrupted, "since I wrote to you. I shall be glad, indeed, to see my sister and her husband, and the boys; but I do not think I shall settle at Ardennan now. I shall move about, at least, for a time. It is too solitary there. I should feel very lonely, Caroline."

They were sitting opposite to one another. As Caroline stole a glance at him, she fancied that a tear glistened in his eye. Surprised and distressed, yet hardly knowing what to say, she hesitated for a second or two. He continued in an altered tone, with a smile like the ghost of that of past times,—

"But I must not sentimentalise. I wonder if the boys will remember Uncle Malcolm. Good fellows! I shall ramble about with them in their holidays, and try to delude myself into the belief that I have not spent seventeen years in India.

I think I could climb yet to the top of the Erne's Cliff. Would it be undignified in the old Indian uncle, think you, Caroline?"

Caroline was glad to hear him address her in this friendly style, but she was not deceived by the lively tone he assumed. He was not happy she was certain. She answered, however, in the same strain, and they continued to converse thus for some time. At last Malcolm said, with an expression half humorous and half sad,—

"And now, Caroline, I think we have talked as much nonsense as duty or politeness requires of us. We are neither of us in a humour for it, and why should we force ourselves to be merry when in truth we are both feeling grave. We are not in a London party now, so we may be natural. Will you, if it is not too painful to your feelings, give me some particulars of poor Lady Cornish's death? How has her husband behaved? Poor, poor Violet!"

She complied with his request, and he listened to her in silence, not speaking for some minutes after she had finished the sad account. At last he said,—

“I wonder how many people — how many families in this world, are really happy?”

“Many, I trust.”

“So I used to trust, even when I was as old as you. But the longer I live I become the more sceptical of the frequency of domestic happiness.”

“Oh, Malcolm, how unlike you to think so gloomily!”

“Perhaps you are thinking, Caroline, of the fable of the fox and the grapes. Well, it may be so—nay, I dare say it is. I beg your pardon.”

“You beg my pardon!” cried Caroline in amazement; “for what offence?”

“For depreciating the happiness of domestic life.”

“Well, it was high treason, and I am glad you have recanted. Domestic life, I am sure, is very happy, both at Locharroch and Edinburgh.”

“Yes, Caroline, wherever you are,” he answered, but in a tone so low that she doubted whether she had heard aright. The words, however, sent the blood in torrents from her heart. She waited breathlessly for him to speak again, but he did

not; on the contrary, without looking at her, he leaned back, and, taking a book out of his pocket, began to read. It was some hours ere he spoke again, and then it was merely to ask, as they stopped at a station, whether she would have a cup of tea or a glass of wine. All the rest of the journey he was unusually silent, and his manner, though kind and gentle, was grave and constrained, and Caroline noticed that he avoided looking at her. What could it mean?

Once, for a brief moment, a wild hope had glanced across her mind, and the bare notion had caused her to tremble with sudden ecstasy. But no, that hope seemed utterly irreconcilable with facts and reason. What obstacle was there if—and the momentary brightness faded away. The heart which had struggled for seven years, must struggle on to the end.

It was a beautiful night when they drew near to Edinburgh. The sun had been set for an hour or two, and the moon, full and calm, silvered the Frith and the Pentland Hills. Malcolm and Caroline looked out from the carriage windows, their hearts alike full, and their tongues alike mute.

Each yearned for the sympathy of the other, yet each sedulously endeavoured to conceal this yearning. And now at last they were in the station. Malcolm jumped out of the carriage, and handed out Caroline. He looked round, and at a little distance beheld the tall, soldier-like figure of the old Anglo-Indian officer, a little bent by the additional weight of seven years, while on his arm leaned a tall, thin lady, with a pale yellow dress, white shawl, and straw bonnet, whom he recognised at a glance to be Agnes. Caroline hastened towards them, while Malcolm looked after the luggage. She was within a few paces when they both turned round. The old man's eyes brightened with delight, and an expression of unspeakable tenderness diffused itself over his high, thin, weather-beaten features, while a tear of joy sprang to the lady's small grey eye.

"Carry, my darling, my own child!" and the Major stooped down to kiss the face that was raised affectionately to his. "Bless her! the pride and the joy of her old father's heart."

"Oh, how ungrateful I am!" thought Caroline, "not to be satisfied with such

affection as this ! ” And with tears in her eyes she turned to kiss her sister.

“ You are looking pale and tired, dear Carry,” said the latter ; “ you must remain in bed all to-morrow, my love. You are so thoughtless about over-fatiguing yourself. How did you leave poor Sir Arthur Cornish ? ”

“ His wife’s death has been a great shock to him.”

“ No doubt, poor fellow,” said the Major, while a tear glistened in his bright, hazel eye. “ There is no such loss as his. He will feel it more and more every day. What a comfort you must have been to him, Carry ! you were right to stay. It was just as your angel mother, my poor Caroline, would have done. But where is Mr. Gordon ? The sight of my sweet wild rose makes me forget everything else.”

“ Malcolm is looking after the luggage.”

“ Right, quite right. I have no patience with people who are so unpardonably careless as to lose their luggage. But whereabouts is he ? Aye ! I remember well when I returned home from India myself, more than thirty years ago now. Mine was a sad coming home.”

Malcolm now approached. The Major shook him warmly by the hand and welcomed him back to his native land. He then thanked him for his attention to Caroline, while Agnes told him there was a well-aired bed ready for him in Ann-street.

Malcolm could find no words to reply to their cordial, simple kindness. When he attempted to speak, something seemed to stick in his throat, and prevent his utterance. His heart was sad ; and, strange to say, the kinder they were the sadder it became — the more he felt he was a stranger, with none on earth to whom *he* was nearest and dearest.

CHAPTER X.

MALCOLM left Edinburgh the following morning. Caroline did not see him before he went away, for Agnes had forced her to lie in bed, that she might rest from the fatigues of her journey. She did not know that he had intended going early, and Agnes had purposely kept his intention a secret from her, that she might not insist on rising. It was a great disappointment to Caroline when she came down-stairs to find that he was gone. With difficulty she refrained from bursting into tears.

"How ill you are looking, Carry," said Agnes, "my poor, dear child! Oh, Carry, now I am sure you have been doing something imprudent. You have been standing in draughts, and taking too much fatigue. Oh, why did I ever let you go to London!"

"You forget, dearest Agnes, I have had a good deal of distress. I shall soon be quite well."

"Distress!" cried the Major. "Heaven bless her dear, good heart!" Then looking at her—for the Major was not nearly so easily alarmed as Agnes, but, on the contrary, belonged to that class of persons who always seek to persuade themselves there is no cause for alarm, even when such really does exist, "why, you are not looking well, my treasure, but we shall soon set you all to rights. We shall go out to walk together, and you must try to get over the painful impression your poor friend's death has made. And you must tell me all about your visit, Carry. What sort of woman is Lady Harriet? You mentioned some time ago that she had promised to introduce you to some artists. What did they think of your pictures? Were they as much admired in London as here!"

"I am sure," cried Agnes, "everybody must admire them — indeed everybody does. I suppose Lady Harriet invited you to go back to visit her."

"I dare say," added the Major; "such

a girl as my Carry must have been a great acquisition to Lady Harriet."

"And poor Sir Arthur," added Agnes ; "I thought of sending him the nicest little book which I have by me. It is called the 'Christian's Comfort,' and explains so nicely why we should not sorrow as if we had no hope. Perhaps, dear, it would be better if you sent it to him. How kind it was of him to give you all his wife's jewels."

"He did not give them to me. Poor Violet left them to me on her death-bed."

"I wish I had known Lady Cornish," said the Major ; "she must have been a very superior woman. Her sudden death, Caroline, has reminded me of a similar calamity which once befell myself. I can tell exactly what her husband is feeling. Poor young man ! And she has left him no child ; *he* has no kind daughter. God comfort him !" he added fervently ; and, looking gratefully towards both his daughters. Caroline threw her arms round his neck, and with tears in his eyes, he pressed her to his heart. Agnes looked up from the trimming she was knitting, for, thinking she must help Caroline to unpack, she

had not taken out her worsted frame that morning ; and while a tear glittered in her eye, she said, " You are too excitable, my dear Carry, indeed you are."

Never before had Caroline been so much affected by the affectionate simplicity and unfeigned kindness of heart of her father and sister. It seemed like a return to the purity and freshness of nature after having been enclosed in a hot-house atmosphere of falsehood, and selfishness, and passion.

" Surely," thought Caroline, " I shall soon recover my spirits here. Oh, Malcolm ! But who is perfectly happy ? I must bear my lot, and surely it is not a very hard one. And he, too, is not happy." And Caroline felt how, above all things, she should have liked to have known his sorrow, that she might have comforted him in it. It seemed to her that all the bliss which earth could offer was contained in possessing the love and the confidence of that true and manly heart. Once she had been privileged to comfort him ; not long ago he had called her his kindest friend, and then, just as hope and love had begun to paint in colours beautiful, though indistinct, a lovely landscape

on the horizon of her life, the mirage had vanished, and she had been left in the desert.

Her father and sister were distressed to see her out of spirits—not that Caroline wilfully indulged in moping or melancholy—on the contrary, she forced herself to be employed, strove to be cheerful, and to talk and jest as in former days. But she could not succeed in convincing them that she was well; for as the weeks passed on she became visibly paler and thinner, and could not at all times conceal the mental depression from which she suffered. Neither her father nor sister, however, suspected the true nature of her malady. Agnes never thought of such a thing as any one being in love, while it never entered into the Major's head to suppose that his Caroline could love in vain. Thus the falling off in her health was attributed solely to physical causes. For a long time the Major refused to perceive, or at least to allow, even to himself, that he perceived that anything was the matter with her; yet a nice observer might have read anxiety in the tone of his voice—even tenderer than of yore, and in

the eagerness with which he shut windows and doors as Caroline approached them, or in the energetic manner with which, when she went out, he recommended her to wear an additional shawl. At last the Major could no longer conceal his anxiety from himself.

"Don't you think we had better send for the doctor, Agnes? There is not much the matter with Carry, still she grows thin, and has lost her appetite. I have no doubt, when the weather is cooler, she will get quite well; still the doctor might put us on some plan of making her eat a little more. What do you think, Agnes? There is nothing serious the matter with her I am certain, still it might be worth while."

"It would be a great comfort to me; I am very anxious."

"Nonsense, my dear," said the Major, testily, but beginning to walk uneasily about the room; "there is no—I am certain there is no real cause for anxiety; Caroline has a good constitution."

"Heaven forbid there should be any real cause, papa, yet I think the doctor had better be sent for."

Notwithstanding, therefore, Caroline's own remonstrances, the doctor was sent for. He said, as was natural enough, that she had over-fatigued herself in London, and that the hot weather disagreed with her. He recommended change of air; and on hearing that she had been invited to visit her brother in the highlands, declared that the mountain air was the best thing for her. It was therefore resolved, that if not inconvenient for Catherine, they should hasten their visit to Locharroch. Caroline knew not whether the prospect of this visit made her glad or sorry; it agitated her considerably. Sometimes she mused over the state of her own mind, and wondered why it was that the same love, the same disappointment which in her girlhood she had been able to bear with fortitude, should now so depress and overwhelm her. Had she less fortitude now,—less resignation to the will of God than in those old days? Or had she foolishly been building her happiness upon a hope which had no rational foundation? But Caroline was not less determined now than then to submit to her lot with patience,

and in the humble faith that it was the appointment of Him who could not err. Her soul was as firm as ever; her health only was giving way. But she trusted much to the highland air to restore her, and to that free commune with the glories of nature, from which she had this summer been so entirely debarred. It seemed to her that she pined for the wild free breath of the mountains, for the voice of the pine-woods and the waterfalls, for the silence and the leisure of Locharroch. Malcolm, too, would doubtless long ere this have recovered his serenity of mind. They would become once more brother and sister. All would be again as it had been long ago. Malcolm's love, she had made up her mind, to live without; but she felt that she could not be resigned to his present coldness and estrangement.

Catherine wrote a very kind answer to Agnes's letter, proposing to make their visit earlier, on account of Caroline's health. She "was sorry to hear of Caroline's illness, as she knew the latter was not one of those young ladies who are constantly tormenting their friends with imaginary complaints. Caroline had

been too gay in London. She had never approved of her going to visit that heartless woman of fashion, the late Lady Cornish; but, peace be with the dead ! That treacherous woman had now gone to answer for her falsehood before a higher tribunal than that of a mere mortal." Catherine thought she "need hardly say that at all times John's family were welcome to his house and hers. The mountain air and plenty of new milk would soon set Caroline up again. She hoped they would come as soon as they possibly could. Malcolm had just come in and joined her in kind remembrances to all the family. He was talking of going over to Ireland for a few weeks, to visit an old Indian friend, but she hoped he would change his mind, as Malcolm's being at home would of course add greatly to the pleasure of their visit."

The Irvine family were busy making preparations for their intended visit, when Caroline received a note from Mrs. William Ross, inviting her to dinner the day before that on which they were to leave home. Although it was rather inconvenient for Caroline to accept this invita-

tion, she felt that she could not well decline it, as it was the first she had received from the newly-married couple, and as she had not only missed seeing them when she had called upon them, but also when they returned her visit. She felt besides, a little curious to see how Mr. William Ross and Mrs. Hunter would comport themselves as man and wife.

She had been invited only to a small family party. Mrs. William Ross "could not bear the idea of her dear Caroline leaving town without having a chat with her. Dear Isabella, too, who was staying with her, was quite wretched at the notion; and as for her *caro sposo*, he had expressed himself so warmly on the subject, that she was inclined to be jealous." Accordingly, when Caroline arrived in Shandwick-place, she found assembled in the drawing-room, besides the host and hostess, only the other members of the Ross family; and to her great surprise, her cousin, John Purves. The latter blushed painfully as she accosted him, held down his head, and twitched the buttons of his coat in the most awkward manner. He was standing beside Maria Ross, who was seated on a sofa. Caroline,

to relieve her cousin from the embarrassment her presence seemed to cause him, now sat down beside Maria, prepared to undergo a little sublimity.

But a minute or two made her aware that some strange alteration had been wrought upon that tragical young lady. She was no longer dressed in black, but wore a coloured silk gown : even the black veil was discarded, and was replaced by a wreath of pink roses. Her eyes were not cast upon the ground ; she looked more cheerful and less affected than she had done for a long time ; indeed Caroline never remembered to have seen her whole manner and appearance so rational before. When she spoke, it was no longer in a sepulchral tone and with an absent air. Never had she been so natural or agreeable. Caroline was yet pondering in her mind what the change could mean, when her attention was temporarily diverted from the subject, by hearing Mrs. William Ross say, in her sweetest, most simpering manner, with a drawling tone, and affectedly shaking her curls,—

“ Now, dearest William, how can you be so naughty as to go near that open

window? You are so imprudent—you never think of your poor wife—you don't indeed;" going up to him, and looking reproachfully in his face. "You men are all alike—you have no consideration for a woman's feelings. I know I heard you sneeze yesterday, William. How can you be so cruel, my love?" And Mrs. William Ross smiled a most sad smile.

The elder Mr. Ross smiled too; a smile which seemed to say, "What folly!" But he was very polite to his daughter-in-law notwithstanding.

"My dear!" said his wife, addressing Mrs. William, "you needn't be the least feared about Willie; he is accustomed to draughts, and never had a cold in his life, but a cold in his head. It doesna do, my dear, to be too anxious. I used to tell my husband so before we lost our fortune. It seems to me we are about as happy now as we used to be. I'm sure I dinna miss it. These things are in the hand of God. And, my dear, if you won't be offended at a little bit of advice from an old woman, dinna tease your husband about his health. Willie aye took very good care of himself."

Mrs. William Ross was too good-natured

to be offended. Moreover, she considered her mother-in-law "a great original, who said the dearest, funny things that nobody minded." She, therefore, merely murmured, in reply, something about "a young wife's feelings;" for Mrs. William Ross always spoke of herself as young.

Willie, meanwhile, laughed, and patted his wife's flaxen locks, saying, "My best angel! my mother is quite right; I really take very good care of myself. I am sure I tied a handkerchief round my neck the other night at Sir George Macdonald's, to please you. Charming party we met at Sir George's, my dear Miss Irvine!—Lord Grangewood, Miss Greggs, the celebrated authoress, and a great number of persons of rank, fashion, and intellect. Such a *réunion* I have not seen since I used to visit in the distinguished circles of Paris with my ill-starred friend Alphonse de Vervier. How well I remember—"

Willie might probably have continued to talk in this strain for some time longer, had he not been interrupted by his wife, who was never satisfied except when he was attending to her; not that she was really jealous, though she often affected

jealousy as a graceful and becoming air ; but she was vain of her handsome young husband, and vain of showing others how devoted he was to her. Willie, though his vanity was pleased by it, in his secret heart thought her fondness “ a great bore ;” but he was too good-natured to say so, and possessed too little firmness to resist it. Thus, though a very weak, and, upon the whole, well-meaning and good-tempered woman, Mrs. William Ross really tyrannized over her husband to such an extent, that he could not call a single moment his own—could not indulge in a single conversation, or engage in any employment, without being instantly interrupted. And this tyranny on the one side, and submission on the other, was becoming daily confirmed into a habit. A more sensible or more spirited man than William Ross would not have submitted to it ; a less amiable one would have been irritated to distraction.

“ My dearest, naughtiest husband !” his wife now called out, “ I wonder you are not ashamed of flirting so with Miss Irvine before my very face. Ah ! you are a sad flirt. Isn’t he, Isabella ? You

ought to remember you have got a wife; but you don't care a bit for her. You would rather have married the Countess Ida—I *know*." And the fair bride pouted, and smiled, and languished.

"My angel!" answered poor Willie, a good deal annoyed, yet greatly pleased, as he always was, at the imputation of being a flirt, "you are really too cruel. I am an old married man now, and my flirting days are over. You allude to what was certainly a sad and dark chapter in the romance of my life; but, my angel! none know better than yourself how the brightness of the present has dispelled all the darkness of the past. Poor Ida! I pity *her*; but for myself, it is nothing now but a dream."

"Well, but don't flirt with Caroline. Caroline! I positively must and will have you married, to prevent you flirting with my husband. I vow I must. Not one of you shall prevent me. But we must go to dinner, as John has just announced it. Mr. Ross, take Caroline; William will take his mother; Mr. Purves and Maria, of course. Isabella, dear, we two deserted women will bring up the rear."

Maria and Mr. Purves, of course ! What could this mean ? For a moment Caroline was startled ; but instantly imagining it was some silly joke of Mrs. William's, she thought no more about the matter, more especially as Maria preserved an unmoved countenance. John, indeed, blushed and looked awkward ; but he frequently did so for no perceptible reason, and the mere fact of his having been made the subject of a jest was of itself amply sufficient to account for his confusion. Dinner passed off dully enough. Mr. Ross was never so chatty now as in former days. Caroline always found it melancholy to be in his company. There was something about him which never failed to impress her with the idea that he was a disappointed man ; and even when he talked, apparently in the same sensible, intelligent, worldly fashion he used to do at Ardennan, she was conscious of a difference which was not the less real that it was intangible. Mrs. Ross, too, seemed sensible of the change. On one occasion she had remarked to Caroline, " I dinna know how it is, my dear, but George never seems to me sae blithesome as he used to

be. I whiles think it is the loss o' our money; but he ne'er complains. I canna think it is my fancy a'thegither. Waes me! If it was nae that I think he minds it, I am just as happy as we are. It is the hand of an Almighty Providence, my dear; and when I think o' that, I know it's best."

Isabella, who was seated on the other side of Caroline, kept on talking in her usual style whenever her father was silent.

"My dearest Caroline, I have such millions of things to say to you, and I want so to hear about poor Violet. We were all so shocked to hear of her death—disease of the heart, I believe—and just after a splendid ball, the papers said. How little did one suppose—was Sir Arthur much distressed? What a scene it must have been! You must tell me all about it, dear, for I am so interested, and so is dear Charlotte—not when Maria is by, however, for though she has quite got over it, she never speaks about them even yet, and we all think it better not. Oh, I have such lots to say!—something that will surprise you, and I think please you; but I promised I would not tell just yet, so

you must not press me. What do you think of Willie and Charlotte? Are they not a happy couple?—quite one's *beau ideal*. Dear Charlotte is *such* a sister and friend to me, you cannot think; and *so* fond of Willie. He could never have been as happy with Ida, fascinating and beautiful as she was. He and Charlotte were made for each other. Are not they a handsome couple? and Charlotte dresses so exquisitely. That silver poplin cost twelve pounds—only fancy! And she is so generous—she gave me the sweetest blue silk; oh, the heavenliest thing! I must let you see it the first time you are at Leith. And she is to give Maria her wedding-dress.”

“Her wedding-dress!” Caroline exclaimed, in amazement, but in the same low tone in which Isabella had been speaking.

“Hush!” replied the latter, mysteriously, slightly shaking her head, and speaking in the lowest whisper; “don’t, for your life, let out that I have given you a hint! Maria would kill me. She will tell you herself all about it. Hush!—she is looking this way.” Then in a louder

tone :—"Some melon, Caroline? I can recommend it. And so Mr. Gordon has come home! To think of its being seven years since he went away! How time passes! Is he much changed? Has he quite got over his disappointment? Men get over these things sooner than women. We sometimes used to hope you would console him. He used to be very intimate and friendly with you, we used to think?"

Isabella spoke in the peculiar tone she always assumed when she wished to get a little bit of gossip out of any one—a tone which she flattered herself was very cunning and diplomatic; but which was, in fact, most amazingly transparent with regard to her motives.

"Malcolm and I have always been great friends, but nothing more," Caroline replied.

"Oh, but there is plenty of time yet; only think how long Willie and Charlotte were acquainted. I should be so glad, my dear Caroline."

"You will never be glad on that account, my dear Isabella," Caroline re-

plied, doing her best to laugh and answer jestingly.

“Well, I am sorry to hear it. Dear Charlotte and I had quite set our hearts upon the match. Charlotte is so anxious for you to be married. She says she could not do without me—so kind of her; and I am not so much admired as you, and all that. And the dear children too!—you have no idea how fond they are of Willie. And they are quite longing to see you. But here they come.”

Caroline was truly glad to see her former pupils, and unfeignedly gratified by the affectionate pleasure they testified on seeing her again. It is so pleasant to be loved.

She was happy also to find that Isabella had only spoken the truth when she said the girls were fond of their step-father. As soon as they had left Caroline, they all crowded round him, while he gave them cakes and fruit, his wife meantime drawling out, “Now dearest William — you cruel, cruel man, why do you pay such attention to the children, and never think of your wife? Ah! you little dream of my feelings. Why should you be so

anxious that little Mary should have grapes when I have none? It is very sad, I declare it is," she added, pouting in her sweetest, silliest manner.

"My best Charlotte, I thought you had been helped. Really, my love, I beg ten thousand pardons; but I cannot see you up there. Shall I fetch you some grapes now?"

"As you please, my darling. You are a dear, good creature after all. I am not quite tired of you yet—you naughty man!"

Willie, now rising, carried a plate of grapes from the foot of the table up to his wife, who smiled sweetly as she received them, and languidly throwing herself back in her chair, said, with playful *ennui*, "I am tired of you—indeed I am! Go away, and don't imagine I am going to be a victim to my affection all my life."

As Mrs. William spoke, she pulled at a lock of her husband's hair, and looking languishingly in his face, gave him two or three little playful blows.

Caroline almost expected Mr. Ross to tell them they were a couple of fools, he looked so exactly as if he thought so. But Mr. Ross was a man who habitually restrained the expression of his sentiments

in words. Willie now returned to his seat and to the girls, of whom he seemed really to be fond.

Willie had certainly married Mrs. Hunter for money and position, coupled with a belief in her good nature. But he was too well principled, as well as too amiably disposed, not to be kind to her children; and because he was thus well-intentioned and kindly inclined, he deceived himself into the belief that he had not married from worldly motives.

As soon as the ladies had withdrawn from the dinner-table, Maria drew Caroline aside.

"Would you mind taking a turn in the back-green with me?"

"Not at all. I should like it."

"Come then."

And the two girls were soon walking arm-in-arm in the little garden behind the house, or the *back-green* as it is the fashion to call it in Edinburgh.

"Caroline," began Maria after they had taken one turn in silence, "I have got something to say to you."

Maria spoke with some little confusion.

"I am ready to listen, dear Maria."

“ Caroline, I need not ask you if you remember, for of course you do, that time at Ardenнан when Arthur Cornish was there. You see I can speak his name with composure now. Oh Caroline! you know that I suffered deeply then and long afterwards, though how deeply neither you nor any one on earth can ever guess. What years of misery I have passed! Oh what years of anguish! But I have determined to throw it off at last.”

There was no affectation—no mock tragedy in what Maria now said. Her words were evidently the genuine expression of her feelings. Occasionally before, she had spoken thus naturally to Caroline, in whose presence for a long time she had been less affected than in that of any other person. It was indeed extremely difficult for any one to be affected in Caroline’s presence, she was herself so thoroughly natural, and went always so simply and artlessly straight to the point.

“ I am glad to hear you say so, Maria,” she now answered; “ I always hoped you would make an effort at last.”

“ It has been very difficult for me, for

my feelings are naturally of the strongest, and I have encouraged instead of repressing the romantic ardour of my disposition. It has been a hard task, and I have often wished, Caroline, that I had your clear common sense and matter-of-fact way of seeing and acting rather than my own more poetic turn of mind. Your nature, I am convinced, is better suited to life as it is than mine."

While Maria spoke, Caroline began to think if her nature was really so matter-of-fact and unpoetic as Maria represented. Was her constant love for Malcolm Gordon unpoetic? Had her long struggles to subdue all vain repinings, to maintain herself, and add to the happiness of her father been unpoetic? Would it have been more poetic to have been idle, and useless, and melancholy? No, certainly not. She was on the point of entering warmly on her own defence, when she remembered that to do so would be virtually to reproach Maria, and with the impulse of a generous nature, and that quick sympathy and tenderness for the feelings of others, which is the truest poetry, she re-

frained, and said nothing. Maria continued :—

“ I am convinced now there is no such thing on earth as that deep, passionate, strong, lasting love of which I once fondly dreamed. I have been taught a bitter lesson, but not in vain. Nobody marries for love, and if I would not be miserable, I must do as others do. Dying lovers and eternal constancy and all that I used to believe in, I am convinced now is nonsense — the delusive dream of a romantic girl.”

“ Oh do not say so, dear Maria,” interrupted Caroline, eagerly,—“ I would die rather than believe it. My own heart tells me that what you say is not true. We may never have it in our power to marry where we do love ; but do not let us be so untrue to ourselves, or to another, as to marry where we do not love.”

Caroline spoke enthusiastically, with a heightened colour, and a brightening eye. Maria coloured too, and her eye fell beneath Caroline's. But she answered in a steady voice.

“ My mind is made up. But do not suppose, Caroline, that I would marry

where I could not esteem. I would not marry a man of bad principles, or a wicked heart,—I would not indeed. But your cousin, John Purves, to whom I am engaged, is a man of excellent character, and very kind-hearted. I can assure you I like him. It does not follow, you know, that every one is to have the same taste.”

“Certainly not,” Caroline answered,—sorry for Maria, who, though she carried it off pretty well, was evidently ashamed of her choice.

A few minutes silence succeeded this response. Maria was the first to break it.

“I shall be happier, I believe, with John Purves, than poor Violet was with Arthur Cornish,—for I have heard that he broke her heart. It was hearing this that decided me. How little did I dream at one time that I should ever be the wife of a writer in limited circumstances in an obscure country town! But I must think no more of those times. Had we been as we once were, before we lost our fortune, things might have been different. There would have been no occasion for me to have married then at all. But Caroline, it seemed dreadful to me to look forward to

the time when I should be an unattractive despised old maid,—with nobody to care for me, and nothing to make me of importance to any living being. Caroline, do you not dread such a fate?”

It was not till after a short pause that Caroline answered,

“No, Maria; sad though it seems, I dread it not so much as an unsuitable marriage. The future is in God’s hands. He will take care of that, if we act in the present as our hearts and consciences dictate.”

“Oh, Caroline! you are a good and noble creature,—I wish I were like you!”

“No, no, Maria, I am neither good nor noble,” sobbed poor Caroline; “my heart is often very weak and very wayward. It is so at this minute. I am not the calm, and sensible, and happy person you imagine me. I only meant,—and it is no merit, for there is not one particle of self-denial in it,—that I could not marry unless I loved. I am ashamed of myself for having made a virtue of it.”

But Maria had not been attending to the last part of this speech. She had been thinking of herself and her own affairs,—

and without noticing what Caroline had been saying, continued,—

“ But I am not marrying out of mere worldliness and selfishness. I shall make my husband happy and respectable. Nobody shall despise either him or me. I confess I have not sufficient strength of mind to brave the fate I have alluded to ; but I shall never be so weak as to repine at any part of the destiny I have voluntarily chosen. I think I shall be happier than I have been ever since that fatal time. I am convinced that love and poetry only serve to make one wretched, and that romance is folly.”

As Maria finished, she stifled a sigh. Caroline thought that there were different styles of love and different styles of romance, and that her style was different from Maria's ; yet she felt for, and even partly sympathised with the poor girl. She had never liked her so well before, for she had never before seen her so natural, or known her so perfectly truthful.

“ Caroline,” her companion said at last, after having in vain waited for an answer to her last speech ; “ I hope I have done nothing to forfeit your friendship, for I

prize it more than that of any one I know. I hope we shall be always friends, dearest Caroline."

"I hope so, indeed, Maria," Caroline answered, warmly; "and you know we shall soon be relations."

It struck Caroline that Maria winced slightly as she thus referred to their approaching relationship; yet the latter was, upon the whole, in decidedly better spirits than she had seen her for many years. And, in truth, her mind was no longer in the restless feverish state produced by ambition disappointed at every turn, time without employment, and life without an object. After many struggles and heart-burnings, poor Maria had at last bid a long and bitter farewell to the proud hopes of the past, and accepted what she believed to be the best destiny offered her. She had made the best of her time at Wetherstone to gain the heart of honest John. He was then, as the reader knows, suffering deeply from his rejection by his cousin Caroline. In addition to the grievous disappointment this rejection had been in itself, it had confirmed him in a suspicion he had long entertained, that

he was a very stupid fellow, and that no woman would ever love *him*. He was, therefore, delighted and astonished by finding himself an object of interest to a handsome, fashionable girl like Maria Ross—a girl of whom he had at first stood dreadfully in awe—and was easily flattered into making her an offer of his hand. He did not love her; it was true, as he had loved Caroline Irvine; but though he had a stupid head, he had a soft heart, and in the present state of his feelings, Maria's kindness was peculiarly acceptable to him, and his vanity was gratified by the idea of showing the world—the Wetherstone world—that he could be chosen by such a woman. He proposed to Maria by letter. This letter he was a week in composing, and he had destroyed more than a quire of paper in the attempt. Even in the end it was far from being a masterpiece of composition. Maria blushed over her lover's grammatical and orthographical errors, and for a moment—it was but a moment—shrunk from setting a seal to the fate she had prepared for herself. But at last, though with an inward loathing, her acceptance was

penned, and dispatched to John, who was lying on a sofa in the breakfast-parlour, awaiting the missive with a red face and a palpitating heart. As soon as it was gone, Maria bolted her door, and burst into a violent fit of tears. It seemed as if her heart would break. But she did not change her mind.

“ Oh, proud ambition lowly laid ! ”

And so it was settled.

Maria returned home a different being — lounged on sofas and read poetry no more ; but studied house-keeping, kept accounts, and mended stockings. With little magnanimity and none of that strength of mind which consists in disregarding the foolish prejudices of vulgar people, and esteeming worldly things at their just value, she possessed both resolution and perseverance. Caroline was the only person to whom her pride had permitted a glance into the true state of her feelings, or into the struggle she had had ; to all others she spoke of her marriage in the most cheerful manner, and as if it had been one of affection entirely, while she never mentioned her future

husband but in terms of the highest respect. There was something in her manner which seemed to command every one to treat him with consideration. She had completely awed both Mrs. Purves and Mrs. Lillie into civility in her presence. They did not like her; but they did not dare to interfere either with her or John, and this was exactly the effect she had hoped to produce. They indemnified themselves by calling her, behind her back—"her ladyship!" and "her highness!"—but, notwithstanding, they were, upon the whole, tolerably satisfied with the match, and boasted of it to all their acquaintances.

With Mr. Purves Maria was a favourite. She did not dislike him so much as his wife and daughter, and had judiciously taken some pains to make herself agreeable to him. He spoke of her as "a handsome, accomplished, stylish girl who would adorn any station. Just the girl I should have chosen for John—she will brush him up, and that is what he wants. Miss Ross has seen a great deal of the world, and of the best society—a thorough lady, and my maxim is to marry a *lady*,

whatever else she may be. Decidedly it is a good thing for John, and for her too, for that matter ; for, I flatter myself, she is entering a family where she will find everything carried on in style. Style and manner is everything to a delicately-nurtured female of refined feelings," Mr. Purves would conclude in his briskest and most consequential manner, throwing himself back in a chair in one of his easiest attitudes, and knitting his brows and pursing his mouth as if further to impress his hearers with the profundity of the reflective powers which led to his decisions.

CHAPTER XI.

THERE was a feeling of melancholy mingled with the pleasure with which Caroline found herself once more at Locharroch. Although still early in the season, the weather was quite autumnal. Grey mists veiled the mountains, and chilly winds piped down the valleys. The dark pine woods were unrelieved by any variety of light and shade, and loomed on the further side of the loch one heavy, black unbroken mass, while the white spray gleamed coldly out on the lead-coloured waters, or broke upon the rocky shore.

It was upon the day of her arrival, on such an evening as I have described above, that Caroline went out, alone, to take her first walk at Locharroch since the return of Malcolm Gordon. Caroline was not

sorry that none of the rest of the party had felt inclined to accompany her. The Major was talking business with his son in the garden, at the same time that they were inspecting the vegetables and the fruit-trees; Agnes was unpacking, while Catherine was entertaining her with an account of all her domestic concerns. Mrs. Gordon and Agnes were great friends. Mrs. Gordon considered the latter "a very useful, sensible, and amiable woman."

She allowed, however, that she was not so clever as Caroline; but she was of opinion that she "would make the better wife of the two." She had once made this remark to her husband, to which he had replied, that "they would both make very good wives, he did not doubt." From this speech, Catherine gathered that he did not agree with her. She was in the habit of thinking her husband could not be mistaken; but in the present instance, as for some reason or feeling (Catherine never analysed her motives) she could not bring herself to agree with him, she accounted for the difference by saying to herself, "Men never do under-

stand these things. They never have the least idea who will make the best wives."

But to return to Caroline. She was, as I have said, pleased to be alone with her own thoughts, yet the pleasure was of a melancholy nature, and her thoughts were almost wholly retrospective. As she paced up and down beneath the beech trees before the library windows, where she and Malcolm had often walked, and where he had talked to her of his past life and his present thoughts, and, without assumption or ostentation, so kindly opened her understanding, and led her young mind to admire all that was good and great, and her heart to share in the unbounded benevolence which filled his own, her eyes swam with tears, and her bosom swelled with emotion. Never had she known any one whose views were so clear and so just,—whose judgment was so little biassed by passion and prejudice,—and who was yet so enthusiastic in feeling, so earnest and steady in action. Once he had, at least, esteemed and liked her; but now she seemed shut out from his sympathy. He had not written her a

line since they parted. All the hopes she had so fondly cherished that all would be as it used to be at Locharroch, had somehow or other to-night become vapoury and unsubstantial, and seemed ready to dissolve away. She was obliged to acknowledge to herself that she had been much disappointed in not finding him awaiting their arrival at his sister's. His absence seemed ominous of the continuance of their unaccountable estrangement; and it appeared to Caroline, whom indisposition had made somewhat nervous and superstitious, that the sad, lowering sky, and cold, wild wind were prophetic of her cheerless destiny,—shut out for ever from the confidence and sympathy of him, who, for seven years, had been a main object of her existence, and whose friendship had lent to her life a glow and interest, of the extent of which, the dreary vacuum consequent on its withdrawal alone made her sensible.

Feeling, however, that it was neither wise nor healthy to indulge longer in the retrospections, comparisons, and forebodings produced by her solitary ramble,

she forced herself to forego the melancholy pleasure, and to turn her footsteps towards the house. On her way thither, she met Catherine and Agnes, who had come out to look for her.

“Now Carry, dearest,” said the latter, “I am excessively displeased with you. I fancied you had been resting on the drawing-room sofa, as I recommended. And you have not even put on a warm shawl. Oh, child! you make me miserable by your imprudence.”

“Indeed, Caroline,” said Catherine, “you are foolish. What inducement could you have to come out in such a disagreeable night? The wind has made your eyes quite red. Not, however, that I see any reason Agnes has to be alarmed. You are looking a little thin and pale; but the Locharroch air will soon set you up again. Malcolm, I suppose, will be over to-morrow, and, if the day is fine, he shall take you out for a walk. I don’t think he is quite well either. I wish he had a wife, though some persons are surprised to hear *me* say so. But I hate such mercenary people. I wish to see

my brother happy,—I wish to see an heir to my father's house ; and my boys will, I trust, carve out a fortune for themselves. I wish you two would help me to persuade Ardennan to marry."

To this speech Caroline found she could return no answer.

All night she lay awake feverish and restless, wondering whether he really would come on the morrow. In the morning she rose unrefreshed and utterly without an appetite. Every sound made her start with the idea that it might be Malcolm.

He came at last—about luncheon time. His manner was kind and friendly to all ; but he had no conversation with Caroline. She tried to hope that it might have been accident that he never sat beside her, never even addressed her ; but though there was nothing in his manner to countenance the idea, her heart misgave her that his avoidance was intentional. He would not remain to dinner, saying he had business at home. Ere he went, however, with true highland hospitality, he invited the whole party to spend a day, or two or three days at Ardennan, if they could

put up with the discomforts of a bachelor's establishment.

"We shall dine with you, Malcolm," answered Catherine; "but we are not going to stay at Ardennan till you have got a wife to receive us."

Catherine spoke jestingly. Her brother answered gravely,

"Then I am afraid, my dear Catherine, you will never come at all, as I shall *never* marry."

As Malcolm spoke his eyes met Caroline's, and they both coloured. It seemed to Caroline, however, that she had read something in that glance which would have made her happy, had it not been for the words which had accompanied it, and his calm, unmoved, and, though friendly, reserved manner, as he bade her good morning.

This first meeting was but a specimen of those which followed. The barrier which had sprung up between them seemed to strengthen. Except the ordinary forms of politeness, they now seldom exchanged sentences, and yet there were moments when an apparently involuntary look or tone of Malcolm's would almost

convince Caroline against her reason that she was beloved,—for, if he did love her, what obstacle was there to his telling her so? If she could only have been perfectly certain that he did not love her,—if she had only understood his feelings as she used to do, she thought she could have been much happier. As it was, her mind was distracted with anxiety, restless with indecision, and miserable with a feeling that it was weak and wrong not at once to cease to hope, and resolve to bear her solitary destiny. In this condition she could neither sleep nor eat. Every day she became paler and thinner, and the naturally joyous expression of her countenance, gave place to one of anxiety and dejection.

There is nothing so utterly wearing out to mind and body as a protracted alternation of hope and fear. It is almost impossible, under such circumstances, to preserve that steady possession of the soul which is the only true moral health. Grief and disappointment every noble and trusting heart will know how to bear with resignation and dignity; but anxiety of long continuance seems to sap the very

springs of life, physical and spiritual, and is the hardest trial to which our faith can be subjected.

"I love him too dearly," thought poor Caroline. "My heart has set up an idol. I am no joy now to my father. He says nothing, but I know he is miserable for my sake. Oh! may God preserve my life for his, even though that life should be to me but one long season of endurance!" And then Caroline would try to smile and jest, as in happier days; but the attempt was a melancholy one.

Poor Agnes's uneasiness was now extreme. The true cause of her sister's indisposition she never even remotely guessed at. She feared she was falling into a decline, and bitterly reproached herself for ever having allowed her to go to London. The Major said nothing, would not even acknowledge his fears to himself, or look into the future beyond a few days; but he was constantly asking her how she felt, and incessantly suggesting something which he thought might amuse her, or do her good. He seemed to have hardly a thought that was not in some way connected with her com-

fort and pleasure, and she rarely looked towards him that she did not catch his eye fixed upon her with the tenderest anxiety. Even Catherine began to be alarmed—and the more so that Caroline seemed always rather to wish to conceal her illness than to exaggerate it. She had always been kind; but now, as at a former season of distress, she became quite affectionate.

“How I should love Catherine if she were always thus!” thought Caroline.

Locharroch himself was the only individual who did not seem to share in the general anxiety. True, as far as it was possible to discover his sentiments, he seemed to be desirous that his sister should be amused and employed, but he did not encourage the proposals which were frequently being made, that she should have medical advice, change of air, and medicine.

“My dear,” said his wife one day, when they were alone together; “I am really a little alarmed about Caroline. What do you think can be the matter with her?”

“Nonsense, with which I am beginning

to be out of patience—not that I blame her so much, either.”

With this answer Catherine was forced to be contented, as she could obtain none more satisfactory. She was greatly relieved, however, to find that her husband was not alarmed, and though still as kind as ever to Caroline, assured Agnes and the Major that there was no cause for alarm, as John seemed to think there was no danger. To this Agnes merely replied by a heavy sigh, looking upwards, as if in earnest entreaty to the Mighty Power, in whose hand are the issues of life and death.

“Danger!” cried the Major; “who ever thought of such a thing? I—I am not alarmed, Catherine. There is no cause—none at all. My darling is a little out of sorts, that is all. She only requires a little nursing, and care, and tenderness. You are too anxious, my dear Catherine. It is all your kindness, I know; but there is no cause for alarm. Caroline has no cough or pain in her side. There is no cause for alarm—none in the least.”

“So John thinks.”

“Does he?” with an air of inexpressible relief, then adding:—“Of course—of course—John is a sensible man, and, besides, understands those things. Carry has a very sound constitution—remarkably sound—sounder than any of us. I am not at all alarmed—only anxious—sorry I mean, to see my sweet pet suffering, and she is so patient—exactly like her mother.”

And away went the Major to look for Caroline, as he always did now when she was absent from his sight for ten minutes.

It was now within a week of the time appointed for the Irvines to leave Locharroch. The visit had not been productive of any of the good which had been expected from it. Caroline was worse instead of better, and with the restlessness which generally accompanies a mental malady when the sufferer has not been prostrated by it into hopelessness, she began to fancy she should be better in Edinburgh. And yet the idea of leaving Malcolm seemed dreadful. It was something even to see him, and to hear him speak, although the happiness his presence

bestowed had something in it akin to torture. Endeavouring, however, to reflect on the matter, her judgment seemed to decide that it was best to go. At home, at least, her mind would not be tempted to dwell on Malcolm by the constant expectation that he might come. She believed now that she had done wrong in coming to Locharroch. She had deceived herself by false and unfounded hopes. She had not dared to look at the truth. As soon as she got home, she would return to her usual occupations, she would recover her lost peace. She would—not forget Malcolm—but learn to think of him as of one who was separated from her by a gulf wider than the ocean which rolls between Great Britain and the Indies. The Major and his elder daughter had no will at present but that of Caroline, and the day of their departure was fixed. But no sooner was it fixed than Caroline began to feel a wish that it might be put off. But this she knew to be weakness, and she resolutely determined not to yield to it.

Only two or three days before that on which they were to set out on their home-

ward journey, the weather being fine, Catherine proposed they should have an early dinner, and all drive over to Arden-
nan to take tea with Malcolm. Caroline's heart beat wildly at the mere proposal. She had wished to see Arden-
nan once more—for the last time, she said to herself; but she had resolved to make no proposal, to take no step which might lead to the desired arrangement. Malcolm should never suspect that she was anxious to maintain a friendship which he wished to break off. She was resolved to die rather than betray to any one how she loved him.

“Should you like the excursion, my treasure?” her father said, turning to her before he answered his daughter-in-law.

“I think a drive would be pleasant—anywhere that Catherine and you like.”

Here, before either Mrs. Gordon or her father-in-law had time to answer, Loch-
arroch, who was still at the breakfast-table, engaged with the morning papers, suddenly looked up and remarked,—

“We cannot have tea or see Malcolm

anywhere but Ardennan, therefore let us go without more ado, unless anyone dislikes going there, in which case, I beg he or she will say so at once."

John spoke rather impatiently, and, as no one answered, Catherine went to give the necessary directions. Ere he returned to the perusal of the newspaper, he gave one quick, peculiar, intelligent, and, as it seemed, reproving glance at his younger sister. She coloured all over, and hastily walked into one of the embrasures of the windows to conceal her embarrassment.

Was it possible that John—the least likely person in all the world — had actually discovered her secret? Caroline, in a state of painful bewilderment, continued to stand in the window, as if admiring the view, till every one had left the room but her brother and herself. She longed for him to go too, as she did not wish to pass him, in case she should again encounter his eye. She was yet standing in a sort of reverie, when she was startled by the sound of his voice at her ear.

"Caroline," he said, "I have no

patience with affectation, and little pity for those who sacrifice their health and happiness to fantastic punctilios or imaginary affronts."

Caroline blushed crimson as she answered in great confusion,—

"I—I will not pretend to—not to know what you mean. But you—you mistake; I know of no affront. He does not care for me,—and—and I am very weak and foolish."

As she spoke she burst into tears, which she strove to repress as she knew John hated tears, and she feared he might be angry. But he took no notice of them, merely asking in a tone as if he were putting a question about any ordinary fact,—

"Why do you suppose he does not care for you?"

"Because he has never said he does; and there is nothing to—to prevent him, if—"

"Unaccountable!" John answered, thoughtfully. "But dry your eyes, and let us go to Ardennan to-day, at all events. What good will tears do?"

"None, certainly," she answered,

wiping hers away,—and trying to look composed and cheerful. “Pray, John, don’t tell Catherine. I shall soon be quite well again, I hope.”

John returned no direct answer; but laying his hand on her head said, with more of softness than she ever remembered to have heard in his voice before,—

“You are a good girl, Caroline, and deserve to be happy;—and you will be, or I am no true prophet.”

Caroline looked up at her brother. Though she had always respected and esteemed him, she had never felt till now that she loved him; but her warm heart responded at once to the touch of kindness, and she was about to make some demonstration of her feelings,—when his unmoved countenance and unapproachable manner repelled her at once. He walked towards the door; but turned back to say,—

“Tell Catherine not to forget the books I mentioned.”

“Yes,” Caroline replied. “What a pity,” she thought, “that so estimable a man as my brother John should be so impassive and so freezing!”

CHAPTER XII.

ON driving up to the hall-door at Ardennan, the first person whom they saw was Malcolm, coming round one of the corners of the house, dressed in a green shooting-jacket, with a Scotch bonnet on his head. As he saw the carriage, Caroline could not avoid perceiving that his blue eye was momentarily lighted up by a gleam of pleasure which as quickly faded, and was succeeded by a grave almost sad expression. He welcomed them all, however, with great cordiality, and reproached Catherine for not having come to dinner instead of tea.

"If nothing else," he added, "you know I have always poultry to give you."

"We don't doubt the hospitality of Ardennan, Malcolm," his sister replied,

"but we preferred coming to tea. We intend to have a walk after tea, and to drive home by moonlight. I thought the excursion would do good to Caroline,—who, I am sorry to say, is still not so strong as we could wish."

She was standing at a little distance. Malcolm looked at her anxiously and inquiringly,—hesitated for a second, and then crossed over beside her. As they walked into the house together, he asked, in a low tone,—

"Are you very ill, Caroline?"

"Oh, no! only not very strong."

"Have you heard from Major Smythe, lately?" was his next question.

"Only yesterday morning," she answered, in some surprise. "But how did you know we corresponded?"

"Forgive me,—perhaps I ought to have pretended not to know. I feared your illness might have been caused by some anxiety. I see I have been indiscreet; but I hope you will pardon me for our old friendship's sake."

As Malcolm spoke, there was a strange bitterness mingled with his naturally cordial and manly tone. He turned to Agnes

ere Caroline could answer him. The latter remained in astonishment. Dim perceptions of the truth began to dawn upon her mind; but so vague and shadowy that she durst hardly cherish the incipient hope to which they seemed to give birth. Moreover, how was this mist which had sprung up between them to be cleared away? She might not see Malcolm again for years. She was in a state of great perplexity. It seemed to her that she was destined to be the victim of some strange mistake.

At tea, Malcolm was unusually lively,—almost as lively as he used to be during the earlier period of Caroline's acquaintance with him. Once or twice, however, she noticed that he became absent and thoughtful, though only for a brief space,—for he suddenly roused himself, and discharged his duties as a host with all due attention and sprightliness. He did not address her once during the meal, though he frequently handed her bread and cake. As soon as tea was over, Catherine urged their setting out upon their walk to Loch Achquaigh immediately.

When the ladies came down with their things on, they found the gentlemen wait-

ing in the hall. Catherine, who was always very attentive to her father-in-law, instantly took his arm.

"Malcolm," she said, "give yours to Caroline."

He offered it at once, but in silence. She took it, but with a slight hesitation. As soon as they were out of the house, he said, "You do not lean on me at all;—have I offended you?"

"Offended me?—No!"

He was silent for a minute ere he answered,—

"I feared I had, for I confess I was out of temper. But it is not very easy,—I cannot help suspecting that you are not quite happy yourself; and I should hate myself if I thought I had added in the smallest degree to your—your annoyances. But do not imagine I wish to surprise your confidence. You are always good and wise—and have, I doubt not, some sufficient reason for withholding it even from me, Caroline, the secrets and thoughts of whose whole heart and life are known to you. I have merely wished to assure you, ere we part for a long, long time, to meet, if we should ever meet again,

on totally different grounds,—that, beyond all earthly things, I wish and pray for your happiness. I have had a hard struggle with myself, Caroline, but I think I have conquered at last, and I only speak the truth when I say that could I have seen you well and happy, I believe it would have been easier for me. I trust my feelings are not altogether selfish. Under the circumstances in which we have been placed, I have felt that it was neither safe nor right to indulge myself as I used to do in the—in the *happiness* of your society; but a time may come—when I shall have become inured to my lonely fate—that I may claim again the true friendship—the kind sisterly regard, which for seven years has been the solace and the charm of my life. Then, in all probability, you will have many nearer and dearer ties; but your heart, I know, Caroline, is wide enough to admit all human affections, and you will still reserve a place in your esteem for your brother Malcolm. May I hope for this, my—my sister, Caroline?”

His voice trembled slightly as he finished, and he appeared to exert himself to re-

pres his feelings. All the time he had been speaking his eyes had been averted from Caroline's face, and now, as he suddenly stood still, as if to wait for her answer, he looked straight forward upon the white clouds driven by the autumn breeze swiftly over the bright blue sky; but he looked as one who saw not. He was only conscious at that instant of a small hand which rested lightly on his arm, and of a gentle, though agitated, breathing by his side. She was, indeed, in the present weakened state of her nerves, too much agitated to reply immediately, and fancying again she might be displeased, Malcolm hastened to add, in accents of disappointment, with perhaps the slightest—the very slightest—mixture of pique, "But forgive me for having intruded my feelings and wishes upon you when you have doubtless sufficient cares of your own to occupy you. I am still selfish, I fear," he continued more softly, and with a stifled sigh, which did not, however, escape his listener's ear.

"Selfish!" she exclaimed; "Oh, no! but you—you mistake strangely in supposing that—that you—that I understand

you. I have never given you any cause to doubt my friendship ; but I feared I had offended you, you have been so changed."

Caroline could not prevent her voice, as she spoke, from expressing some of the anguish, the change to which she alluded had caused her. He started, but still did not look at her face. Had he done so, he could hardly have failed to read in her burning features and downcast glance somewhat of the truth.

" You have not understood me, Caroline. You must, indeed, then have thought me strange, and I fear unkind. But I can hardly believe—and yet I must, for you are truth itself—that you have not read my secret. I thought it had been but too plain ; and now, gentle and generous woman, I fear the avowal I must make will give you pain. I love you, Caroline,—not with a brother's love, but with a love as passionate as it is hopeless."

He spoke in a low but firm tone, and as he finished, drew one long, hard breath, and disengaging his arm from Caroline's slight hold, pressed his crossed hands tightly on his breast, and fixed his eyes on

the ground. Caroline's heart throbbed wildly, her head swam, and her eyes dazzled.

"Hopeless!" she cried, in a voice breathless with intense emotion,—“Oh, Malcolm! why hopeless?”

“Why!” he said, turning round and looking at her fixedly, though her countenance was bent down, while his tone was firm almost to sternness, “because you love,—you are engaged to another man.”

He turned and would have walked on, but with a sort of desperate calmness, and feeling instinctively—for she could not reason—that all depended on the moment, she called out, “Stop, Malcolm! oh, stop! you mistake strangely. I am not—I never was engaged to any other man!”

She looked at him as she spoke, and for the first time their eyes met. In that glance he read almost all he wished to know. She reiterated, “I love no one, Malcolm—no one at least but,—”

“But whom? darling of my heart,—but whom?” he said, taking the hand he had dropped, and looking earnestly in her agitated face.

She answered in a low, but distinct voice,
“You only,—and for ever!”

“And you only,—and for ever!” he repeated, as, bending down, he kissed her tenderly; then once more drawing her hand within his arm, and holding it against his heart, they walked on in silence.

It was a fine afternoon in September, breezy and sunshiny, and cold enough to be bracing, without being disagreeable. As the lovers turned round the angle of a rock, and the whole expanse of Loch Achquaigh opened out before them, the blue waters were rippling and breaking into little white caps in the breeze, the light clouds fled hastily athwart the sunny sky, and the shadows chased one another over the clear heathery hills. The air was full of the wild scent of heather and pine, the coral berries of the rowan-tree gleamed amid the dark woods, and the tones of the mountain breeze mingled with the fall of the distant torrent, and the liquid ripple of the lake as it broke upon the rocky or pebbly shore.

“Let us sit down, my Caroline,” said Malcolm, “for I am sure you must be tired.”

As he spoke, he selected for a seat a flat granite rock at a little distance from the edge of the lake. This seat was shaded by some oak copsewood, which grew at the top of a bank amid an undergrowth of ferns and heather, while some trailing shoots of the ivy, interspersed with lichens and moss, clasped round the rugged granite projections.

“Caroline,” Malcolm said, after a short pause, “do you remember that cold winter day, now nearly eight years ago, when I was so very miserable? Do you remember how kindly you spoke to me then? You were the first to comfort me, Caroline. Even in the very hour of my distress about poor Violet, I believe I began to love you, though without knowing it. It was not till I was far removed from you, my beloved, that I became aware of all you, young, almost childish, as you were then, had been to me. I discovered that in truth you had been far more to me than Violet had ever been—far more truly the companion of my soul—the sharer of all my thoughts and feelings. From the ashes of my old passion arose a purer and a steadier flame. You had grown to be part

of my very heart and life ere I was aware that you were more to me than a kind little sister. How anxiously in India I used to look for your letters—so like yourself they were, so full of sense, and animation, and kindness. Sometimes the idea crossed me, like that of some exquisite and distant day-dream, that I perchance might teach that warm heart a warmer feeling than it had yet experienced. This, I have said, was my day-dream; but in my soberer moments it seemed to me irrational to hope that it could ever become truth. I said to myself, that with so many attractions as you possessed, and with feelings so generous and affectionate, it was almost impossible your affections should continue disengaged till my return; and even if they did, I feared you had been too much in the habit of regarding me as an elder brother ever to feel for me a warmer sentiment. Every letter that I have received from you for two or three years, I have endeavoured, before opening it, to prepare myself for the announcement of your marriage—I have indeed, Carry. But, although I was convinced you were the only woman with whom I could be

happy—the wisest, truest, most affectionate of your sex ; I did not know, till I saw you again in London, how I loved you. I had fancied that I was too old to be romantic ;” here he stole a sly glance at her ; “ but I found I was quite mistaken. Moreover, I believe I am destined now to continue so all my life long.” He stopped for a second, looking in her face with a sort of faint mirthfulness, while his lips were slightly drawn together, with a pretence to conceal a smile, which broke out, however, at the corners of his mouth, and in the brighter glance of his clear, kind, blue eye. He was evidently the same old Malcolm as ever. Years had not quenched the buoyancy of his temper any more than they had chilled the warmth of his heart. In answer to his look, Caroline merely threw at him, in sportive mischief, a mountain-ash berry, which she had picked from the ground. Her heart bounded with delight to see him so happy, and to think that she had made him so.

After shaking his head at her, he continued, more gravely,—

“ But at that very moment, Caroline, in which I first felt how my soul loved

you, despondency took possession of me. You were still so young and so beautiful—so much more beautiful even than I had imagined, that it seemed presumption in a sun-burnt old bachelor like me to dream of winning the love of a woman such as you were. Beautiful Caroline!—beautiful in my eyes for evermore! But hope still lingered faintly, till that evening at the ball, when I saw you with Major Smythe, and heard on all hands that you were his betrothed: a report which every circumstance, then and since, has tended strangely to confirm. Oh, my love! I was indeed disappointed. It seemed so hard: and now, in my second disappointment, I had no kind little sister, no gentle ministering spirit, to bid me be comforted. I dared not even seek for consolation in your friendship; for I felt that the time was past when, in your presence, I could restrain the expression of my feelings within the bounds of mere friendship; and I could not wound the feelings of one whom I revered not less than I loved, or compromise my own principles, by addressing the betrothed wife of another man in the language even of a disappointed lover. It

was only your saying that you did not understand me, that drew forth the avowal of what I supposed my unfortunate attachment; for I wished you to understand me, Caroline. It was not pride that held me silent, and I knew you too well not to be certain that, in learning my feelings, yours would only be those of the most generous and delicate pity—such pity as it could hurt not the proudest or most sensitive spirit to be the object of. And now, my own, I am only puzzled to know how you have happened to fall in love with me, or when your kind affection for your brother Malcolm began to change into the sentiments you are now so generous as to entertain.”

A shade of the deepest thought and feeling passed over Caroline’s countenance, which suddenly broke into a smile, as she asked,—

“ Did you ever, Malcolm, read a little book, called ‘ A Father’s Legacy to his Daughters ? ’ ”

“ Yes, darling, I think I have. What then ? ”

“ It is long since I read it; but I remember one piece of advice the author

gives, is, that a woman ought never to tell her lover how much she loves him. The mere fact of her accepting him, is, it is said, sufficient. I forget the words now, it is so long since I read it; but the meaning is, that she will lower herself in his opinion by expressing more openly her affection. What think you of the wisdom of this advice?"

Malcolm, ere he replied, fixed his eye on hers, with an expression as if he were much inclined to laugh. He did smile, as he replied,—

"I am afraid, my Carry, that even if I thought the advice good, I should not be sufficiently virtuous to say so, as I have a presentiment you are going to say something that, reprehensible man that I am, according to Dr. Gregory, I should very much like to hear, and that you might thereby be prevented saying. But, fortunately, I can say with truth, that the wisdom, if wisdom there be, savours of worldliness. Caroline, I will be candid. If you think your Malcolm mean and ungenerous, and tyrannical in disposition, prone to take advantage, rather than to imitate the goodness with which he comes

in contact, then, by all means, take the worthy Doctor's advice. The mere fact of your accepting such a man is quite sufficiently expressive of your love; as all the love you could feel for him must, I should think, be expressed in the fact. But if you have a better opinion of the man you have promised to marry, trust to your own true heart for impulses wiser than any to be obtained in good-girl books, which seem to me to be invariably constructed on the fundamental principle that all men are bad."

"Well, then, to overstep at once the dignified coldness, and break the decorous silence proper to all well-conducted women, I mean to tell you, Malcolm, not only how much, but how *long* I have loved you. According to 'good-girl books,' as you call them, the truth, I am afraid, is disgraceful to me."

As Caroline spoke, she blushed very deeply. Malcolm looked at her with an expression in which curiosity was blended with admiration.

After a short pause, she continued, in a steady tone, but without raising her eyes,—

“ You have mistaken me, Malcolm. I do not think I have ever loved you as a sister.” As she spoke he started, but said nothing. She went on. “ Long, long ago, when you loved poor Violet Smythe, I loved you as one so far removed from me in goodness and wisdom, that the idea of a return of my affection scarce crossed my mind. Afterwards, your distress—the confidence you reposed in me—the regard with which you honoured me—raised me in my own estimation, and seemed to bring me nearer to you. Malcolm, do you remember one afternoon, on the divan in the library, when I was so foolish as to cry?”

“ I do,” he answered, his countenance every instant assuming a stronger and yet stronger expression of interest and surprise.

“ You said I was too young to understand you, that I was but a child ; and I was a child in many things, but not in all, for I loved you even then with a woman’s love, as I love you now, as I have loved you all these long years, as I shall love you to the end of my life. But do not suppose, my dear Malcolm, that my love for you has made me unhappy. Moments

of sadness and depression, more especially of late, it may have given me ; but it has been, notwithstanding, one of the chief blessings of my existence. If I have made any effort to do right, it has helped to nerve me ; if I have had anything to suffer, it has helped to sustain me ; and when I have been happy, it has made me happier still. It has added a deeper meaning to my whole life ; it has improved my whole character ; it has made me more worthy of the happiness which has now been given me ; and if I have at any time felt pain or anxiety, they are now more than recompensed. At last—at last—oh, I am happy !”

As Caroline spoke, she placed her hand in his, and burst into tears. For some minutes he made no reply, merely raising her hand to his lips, and kissing it with tender reverence. At last he said, but in a voice which faltered with feeling, “Caroline,—I will not even attempt to tell you the gratitude I feel, for it is far—oh, far beyond all words ; but I trust God may spare me to show by my life, that though unworthy of your goodness, I am not insensible of it. In love, at least, if

in nothing else, I shall deserve you. Why do you weep so, my own?" he added,—for she continued to weep more passionately than she had ever done since the day Malcolm had bid her adieu in Ann-street, previous to his departure for India.

"I cannot tell, Malcolm, except that I am not strong enough at present to bear so much joy. It seems such a change, and so sudden. I felt that I was choking. You must help me to regulate my feelings, and in the mean time forgive all that is wrong in them."

Malcolm replied by putting his arm round her, and drawing her close to his heart. And once more, as in the olden time of her girlish, unregarded love, she felt the strong throbbings of that heart so true, so tender, and so manly against her own yearning bosom; but now—oh what a change! That heart beat no longer in solitary anguish, but in happy harmony with hers.

"Bring ever all your happiness and all your care here, my Caroline, and rest assured that here at least your feelings will ever meet with sympathy." And

thus encouraged, as on that dark afternoon in the library, she continued for a long time to weep; her tears, however, coming always more and more gently till at last they ceased to flow, and instead of the tumultuous joy which had at first convulsed it, a peaceful calm stole into her soul.

Meanwhile the sun set clear behind the western hills, the golden radiance faded from the mountain tops, the wild breeze died away, the dews fell softly, and the clear moon shone sweetly on the lake, now still as a mirror.

Malcolm's heart was full of unutterable happiness, and his spirit rose in gratitude to the Giver of all good. Voicelessly but fervently he prayed that he might be enabled to make happy the beloved woman who had loved him so long and so well, and that neither of them might ever forget that their mutual attachment was given them, like all other blessings, not for mere selfish ends, but that they might with it glorify the Creator and Saviour of the earth by making it a blessing to all around them.

It was not till the twilight had given

place entirely to the moonlight, and a broad, fan-shaped track of silver marked the clear, dark bosom of the lake, that Malcolm thought of the hour.

“Dear Caroline,” he said, “it is very late, and the dew is falling. My dearest child, how could I be so thoughtless as to let you sit out in the damp, and you so far from well !”

“Oh, do not think of that ; it will do me no harm, and I shall soon be well now. Leave taking care of me to Agnes, Malcolm. It is her especial department.”

He laughed ; “Not now. I shall contest the matter with her.”

“Come, quick—for they will wonder what has become of us !” she cried, starting up. They walked briskly back to Ardenнан, where they found the rest of the party, anxiously awaiting their reappearance, and inclined to be angry at their prolonged absence. The Major muttered something about disliking people playing such tricks, and not being punctual, and frightening their friends, softening his censure, however, by remarking that he had never known Caroline do such

a thing before. Agnes was almost in despair about the night-air and the dew, and Catherine said, "Ring the bell, Malcolm, if you please, and order the carriage. John, I know, hates to be so late, though he has not said a word."

"Wait a minute, my good sister; you must all stay and have something to eat. I am sure, Catherine, for the honour of Ardennan, you will not go fasting."

"If we do, it is your own fault, and Caroline's."

"But we won't go," said Locharroch, speaking for the first time; "and we will forgive the two delinquents *for once*."

Catherine could not understand her husband. She had never known him vote for staying late anywhere before. Finding, however, that *he* was not impatient, she quickly recovered her good-humour, and joined Agnes in insisting that Caroline should take a glass of *toddy* (whisky punch) to prevent the bad effects of the damp night air.

CHAPTER XIII.

It may easily be believed that Caroline did not sleep very soundly that night. Hardly an hour passed that she did not rise to look out on the moonlight, or to see if the dawn was breaking. At last the eastern sky was brightened by a pale light, the shadows became less black and massive, the moonbeams paled in the morning twilight, and the sun rose gloriously over the blue mountains in the distance. Caroline got up and dressed. She was feverishly happy; yet happy though she was, she longed for rest and calm, and this it seemed to her she could obtain anywhere better than in bed. The stillness and silence seemed to chafe and irritate her. As soon as she was dressed, she tried to read, but after persevering for

about half an hour in an ineffectual endeavour to fix her attention, she gave up the attempt as hopeless, and resolved on going out to enjoy the morning air.

It was a sweet, fresh morning, clear and cold. The tiny wavelets on the lake and river, and the dewdrops on the grass and shrubs, glanced bright in the slanting sunbeams, which glittered through the birch-trees and chequered the lawn with bars of gold. The pine wood looked pale and misty in shadeless light, the mountains were dim and distant, and, in the faint haze in which they were enveloped, scarcely to be distinguished from the horizon. The soft note of the wood-pigeon, or the hushed murmur of the river, alone disturbed the silence. The dewy freshness of the air seemed to cool Caroline's fevered frame, the sweet and peaceful scene to breathe a portion of its calm into her agitated spirits. And her life was to be spent among those beautiful scenes, and spent with Malcolm!

She was yet reposing, with a tranquil, half-incredulous joy and wonder upon the idea, when she descried—no, it could not be at this time in the morning, and yet

it was—Malcolm, approaching by a little footpath through the trees by which lay the nearest walking road to Ardenнан. She quickened her footsteps as he hastened towards her.

“Why, Carry!” he said, smiling at her, while, taking both her hands, he kissed her tenderly; “what has made you rise so early, you foolish child?”

“You must tell me, first, what has made *you*?” she answered, colouring and smiling in her turn. “Do not imagine that I am so foolish as to make my confession without first hearing yours.”

He laughed and coloured slightly, too. “I see,” he said, “I shall not be able, with the usual generosity and manliness of my sex, to draw off attention from my own weaknesses by exposing yours. There is the inconvenience of falling in love with a clever woman. One cannot maintain that reserve of feeling which is so necessary to the proper dignity of a lord of the creation, as your clever woman will not fail to discern the human frailties even behind the imperial nod and magnificent demeanour which would not have disgraced the Olympian Jove himself.

There is no doing the grand and the incomprehensible to you — provoking, simple-minded, clear-sighted child that you are. I much fear me you will never respect me, Caroline, as you ought to do ?”

“ Shall I not, Malcolm ? Shall I not respect true dignity as much as mock ?”

“ You are right, after all, I believe, Carry. There *is* something respectable in honest absurdity, such as I suspect we have both been guilty of this morning. It must be confessed that being in love is not conducive to sound sleep, and wise people though we be, Caroline, we are, I fear, as ridiculous as other people in our situation—that is to say,” he added, “if it really be ridiculous to love. But I much question the world’s wisdom in the decision it has come to on that point, as well as on many others.”

Malcolm and Caroline were yet walking up and down, arm-in-arm, beneath the beech-trees, when Catherine perceived them from her bedroom window. She called to her husband, who was in his dressing-room adjoining, to come to her.

“ Well ?” he said, as she pointed to

the lovers, who were at present standing still, with their faces from the house and towards the lake.

“What do you think, Locharroch, can have brought Malcolm here at this time in the morning; and why is Caroline up so unusually early, I wonder?”

“Cannot you guess?”

“It has just glanced across my mind; yet surely it cannot be that Malcolm is paying his addresses to Caroline!”

“Why cannot it be?”

“It seems unlikely. What do you think?”

“I think it certain.”

“Do you, indeed? The idea never struck me till last night; and even then I thought it only a notion.”

“You have not discovered your usual penetration then, my dear. I have been aware of it for weeks. But how do you like the match?”

“Very well, I think,” Catherine replied, yet in a tone as if she were not altogether satisfied; “I am very anxious for Malcolm to marry, and Caroline is a very nice girl, and not nearly so conceited as she used to be. Perhaps they might

both have made a more suitable match ; but one cannot expect to arrange other people's marriages."

" A very sensible conclusion, my dear. Moreover, the match seems to me a very suitable one—quite as suitable as our own, for instance, and very similar to it in many of the circumstances ; and I, at least, have never repented of that."

Catherine coloured slightly.

" I must allow," she said, " Caroline has been an excellent daughter, and will, therefore, make a good wife. She has a very sweet temper, and plenty of sense when she chooses. Poor thing!" she added, after a short pause, during which her eyes had been fixed on the two, who had now seated themselves on a garden-seat, her heart softening as she spoke ; " I know now what has made her look so pale and thin."

The husband and wife descended together to the breakfast-room. There they found Malcolm alone. Caroline had gone to her sister. Malcolm rose and advanced to meet them.

" I have something to tell you," he said.

"We can guess what it is," his sister answered, laughing, and with that peculiar expression of amusement usual on an occasion such as the present — an expression which would lead one to imagine that there was nothing so ludicrous in the world as those feelings which lead to the most solemn transaction of life.

Malcolm saw, at once, that they knew. "Are you pleased?" he said.

"Very much," she replied, with considerable warmth.

She had hardly finished speaking, when Caroline, accompanied by Agnes, who held her younger sister by the hand, and looked pale, nervous, and almost scared, entered the room.

Mrs. Gordon instantly advanced to meet her, and, kissing her affectionately, said—"My dear husband's sister, you are welcome to me as the affianced wife of my dear brother."

"I can wish you nothing better, Malcolm," said Locharroch, "than that my sister may make you as happy as yours has made me. And you, Caroline—I congratulate you. You have every prospect of being, as you deserve, a very happy woman."

Malcolm, considerably affected, shook his brother-in-law warmly by the hand, the latter meanwhile maintaining the utmost calmness of manner. The former then turned to set a chair for Agnes, who looked as if she did not know very well where she was.

The Major was now the only one of the party who was yet ignorant of the engagement of the lovers. They resolved to inform him of it, and ask his consent to their union as soon as he came downstairs.

He did not seem so much surprised, and was less overcome by the intelligence than Agnes had been. Nevertheless Caroline could feel that the hand she held in hers trembled, while a tear started to his clear hazel eye. He replied, however, with soldier-like firmness, addressing Malcolm,

“Young man,” he said, “I am not surprised that you should love my daughter Caroline; she is an angel—an angel like her mother. In giving her to you, I give you my most precious treasure; but I believe you to be a brave, honourable, true-hearted and pious man, and to such only could I have given her. Love

her, then, as I have loved her,—better you cannot. Be kind to my darling, if you would not break the old man's heart, or be unloved when your hairs are as white as his. And you, my precious, be happy, and your old father will be happy too—separate even from your dear presence. I always knew it must come to this! I am not so selfish as to wish it otherwise," he added, as if partly in soliloquy, while his lips trembled, though he evidently made a great effort to control his feelings.

"My dearest papa," cried Caroline, "I shall see you every day. You will come to live near me, won't you?—and let Malcolm be a son to you."

"Every hour of every day, I trust," said Malcolm, who seemed much affected by the old man's address; "there is plenty of room for us all at Ardenнан. No, I do not wish to take your daughter from you, I only wish you to receive me as your son. You will come, will you not? and let us all make one happy family together. Ask your father, my Caroline, he cannot refuse you."

But Caroline could not answer; her

heart was too full for speech. She merely replied by putting her hand in Malcolm's, and looking at him with eyes glistening with love and gratitude. The Major, after making an effort, as if to gulp down something, and turning to Malcolm, answered in a husky voice, and with quivering lips,—

“God bless you, good young man ! I am happy in giving you my daughter, for I feel that when my head is laid in the grave, I shall leave her to the protection of one worthy of the trust. With regard to your invitation, I must think about it before I can decide ; but in the meantime I thank you heartily.”

Malcolm turned his head aside for an instant, hastily twinkling away a drop which had gathered on his eyelashes, and then approaching Agnes said,—

“You will be on our side I trust. You must come to help me to prevent Caroline going out in the night air and the damp, and to make her wear warm shawls and thick shoes. I have heard so much of her carelessness in these matters, that I feel certain my authority, without your aid, will be quite insufficient to

make her more attentive. I think it not unlikely, my dear Agnes, that your coming to Ardenнан may be the saving of Caroline's life."

Malcolm made this speech with all possible gravity; but Caroline recognized in it the old mixture of jest with earnest, of laughter with kindness, which used long ago to puzzle while it fascinated her. Agnes answered with grave simplicity,—

"I believe you are right; it is a very important consideration, and I am quite glad you are sensible of its importance. So few young men think of these things, yet it is of great consequence that Caroline's husband should, as carelessness about her health is her great fault. I was just thinking of the winter for her here when you spoke."

"Caroline," Malcolm said, looking at her with a mirthful eye, but speaking gravely, "when we go out after breakfast, you shall put on my large plaid."

"Your large plaid, Malcolm! Why it is a very warm day; it will suffocate me."

"Suffocation, or any other discomfort, is nothing compared with catching cold."

"But my dear Malcolm," said Agnes,

with mild earnestness, "though persons, and particularly Carry, are apt to err on the other side, it *is* possible to catch cold by being overheated."

"Come to breakfast, every one of you," cried Catherine, who was now pouring out the tea; "we are more than an hour after our proper time."

I shall not attempt to describe the events of the few weeks which intervened before the wedding, which was fixed to take place in October. The Major liked his son-in-law better and better every day. Hardly an hour passed that he did not remark to Caroline that "he was a noble fellow, and did credit to her choice, and deserved, that he did, to have been a soldier." Neither shall I relate the comments of the Purveses, or the Rosses, or Mrs. Lillie; sufficient to say they were all in perfect unison with their various characters. Mrs. John Purves, who was on her marriage trip when she received the intelligence, wrote a very kind and sensible congratulatory letter, and her husband "united with her in best wishes."

"By-the-bye, Caroline," said Malcolm,

as she finished reading this letter aloud, "where shall we go for our tour?—shall we go to Victoria Continent?"

She laughed, and shook her head at him,—"I shall punish you," she cried, "if you don't behave better. You have got too good a memory for my follies."

"Follies, do you call them? Your follies, my Carry, were more promising than the wisdom of other children. What a sweet wise child you were! I often fancy you are in many things still the same. You are the same wild rose transplanted, and become a lovely garden-flower, without having lost one of its native graces, my beautiful Caroline!"

I shall not even stop to give a detailed account of the wedding, which took place at Locharroch. According to Catherine's wishes, it was conducted in the true Highland style, the whole inhabitants of the strath, high and low, rich and poor, being assembled on the occasion, and the festivities concluding, after lots of reels and strathspeys, to the sound of the bagpipes, with an abundant supper, and a bonfire on the top of Bennachquaigh, which

was seen all round the country for many miles.

* * * *

It was on a day early in November that Malcolm Gordon and his bride drew near to Ardennan. They had been at Paris instead of Victoria Continent.

It was a calm, bright afternoon, a little frosty, but not very cold. The hills were now quite brown, the bloom was gone from the heather, and the long leaves from the feathery fern. The fir-woods had assumed their most sombre hue, and the deciduous trees had been partly swept of their leaves, while the scanty foliage which remained was "red and sere," as became November. The fallen leaves, russet and yellow, were strewed on the turf or on the placid bosom of the lakes, or were borne down the clear current of the streams. The mountain-ash, too, was stripped of its coral clusters; but the many-hued mosses and lichens, and the dark green ivy, still clung to the grey rocks, and crept lovingly round the boles of the trees, while the red berries of the ever-green holly, surrounded its stiff, shiny

leaves, and ripened and darkened in the still, clear atmosphere. The rustling of the withered leaves, the ripple of the lake, the fall of the stream, the song of the robin, the cooing of the wood-pigeon, and the wild cry of the water-fowl, came distinctly on the ear in those mountain solitudes. The bloom and the glory of the year were gone, it was true, but to Malcolm and Caroline Gordon there was beauty as great in the sweetness and calm of its decline.

The lakes and mountains, the rocks and streams, the birchen glades, and wild bare moors of their home, were as dear to their hearts in their present graver aspect, as when they glowed with the varied hues of a brighter season.

The husband and wife clasped each other's hands, and their hearts beat quicker.

"I think I hear something," said Caroline.

"It is the clansmen coming to meet us," Malcolm answered; "we shall see them when we have passed round that copsewood."

And, as he said, in a few minutes

more, they were in sight of a considerable concourse of people, who gave a loud cheer of welcome as they caught sight of the carriage, continuing to shout louder and louder as they drew nearer; and, to testify their satisfaction, by blessings on the laird and his lady, and cries of "Welcome to Ardennan!" They would then have taken out the horses and drawn them home, but to this Malcolm would by no means consent.

And now they are in the Ardennan grounds, and still attended by the crowd, and to the wild music of a pibroch, the echoes of which die far away among the rocks and mountains, they are driving slowly up the long approach, past the little gleaming lakes, and the silvery stems of the birches, denuded now of their airy foliage. And now they are in sight of the old grey tower, and now the carriage stops at the door, and the Major, and Agnes, and Wattie, and Peggy, and one or two of Malcolm's domestics appear in the doorway. And rushing forward with a plate of short-bread (a species of cake made of butter and wheaten flour), Peggy dashes it over the carriage as an omen

of wealth and good fortune. Then Malcolm jumps out, and hands out his bride, and leads her into the house; and, as soon as the door is closed, kissing her affectionately, he says, in a tone low with feeling,—

“Wife of my heart,—welcome home!”

And Caroline’s bright eyes are full of tears, and her voice is tremulous as she answers,—

“My dear home!—my dearest husband!” And then the Major and Agnes kiss their recovered treasure, and the latter remarks, with satisfaction, that the cheek of her darling is plump and rosy, and that she does not seem to have over exerted herself at Paris, or to have got cold from the sea-air in crossing the Channel.

Caroline next shakes hands with Peggy and Wattie,—and the latter presents her with a gigantic bunch of flowers, gallantly remarking, “Nane sae bonnie as yoursel, Mrs. Gordon, wha was aye the rose o’ the lowlands. The floors is nae that ill keepit here, but we’ll hae a hantel mair grand anes, the next simmer, Ise warrant. Let auld Walter alane for a lang-headed chiel.”

Meanwhile, with eyes full of tears, Peggy continues to ejaculate, "Eh, Sirs! to think o' the bairn! An' it seems like yesterday sin she was a babbie in my airms, wi' her bonnie wee mouthie an' glinting een, an' bits o' auld-farrant ways! An' now to see her sic a braw leddy, wi' her gallant hieland husband, blessings on him! Hech! hoo time changes a'!"

"You see I have married a highlander after all, Peggy, and you have come to the highlands yourself, in spite of the rocks and the scaurs, and the witches and the warlocks, and the wild folks with kilts and claymores."

"Hoo could I bide awa frae you, hinny, and frae the Maister and Miss Irvine? An' they dinna wear the kilts. It's an unco like thing to think o' the lees folk tells—an awsome, waesome thing! an' I'm thinking that aiblins the witches is nae waur here than at hame."

Here the cheering outside becomes louder and wilder, and Malcolm, hurrying Caroline up-stairs, throws open one of the windows, and leads her forward to it. As soon as the hearty shout with which they are greeted has a little subsided, Malcolm

makes a short speech, in Gaelic, to the assembled crowd : — “ My kinsmen and friends,” he says, “ I thank you in my wife’s name, as well as in my own, for the hearty welcome you have given us. We have come to spend our lives among our own people and our own mountains, and we trust that God will bless and prolong the harmony which subsists among the sons of the Gordons ; and that as we are brothers in blood, so we may be brothers in love. My kinsmen, let us fear God, speak the truth, and be sober and industrious, and he will bless our land and our clan with peace and prosperity. In the long winter which is now approaching, in cold, or hunger, or sickness, remember you have friends at Ardennan, ready to help and comfort you. Again I thank you for your kind sympathy in my happiness. Dinner awaits you. May you enjoy it, and may you all be as happy as I am this day. For the present, farewell ! ”

Another cheer, long and loud, is the response, and many voices are heard to exclaim, “ Blessings on Ardennan ! Long life to the good laird and his bonny lady — the bonniest lady in all Strath — . ”

To the sound of the pibroch the crowd then disperses, and Malcolm shuts the window.

His early trials, his later disappointments and anxieties, his years of exile and solitude fade away like a dream. He has paid his father's debts, redeemed his family's honour, and by fairer means and a truer title than perhaps his ancestors could boast, he has repossessed himself of his lost inheritance, crowning the success of his life with the love of a beautiful, generous, noble-hearted woman—one of those women whose price "is above rubies."

And Caroline—her youthful devotion, her self-denying friendship, her energetic toil, her unfaltering constancy, are requited at last. There is not in all the length and breadth of the land a happier domestic circle than that assembled this evening round the fireside of this mountain home; for there are simple, warm hearts, cheerful tempers, disciplined minds, truth, courage, piety, and love. And now let us leave them, in the hope that, whatever sorrows, or trials—and assuredly they must have some—they may have to encounter during

the rest of their voyage over life's great sea, these will weather the wild winds, and bear them aloft over the billows and the surges to the immortal kingdom, of whose happiness the greatest earthly happiness is but the palest and faintest reflection.

But a few words more, and I have done.

The Rosses continue to reside at Leith, and the William Rosses in Edinburgh. Isabella is still unmarried; Mrs. William is as fond of her husband as ever, and makes him quite as uncomfortable by her affection as she used to do, while he still submits, endeavouring to persuade himself, but without much success, that he is very happy, and does not at all regret the time when he flirted with the Countess Ida, or even with Helen Wilson and Christian Buchanan.

Mrs. John Purves has a neat, small house, which she keeps in the most beautiful order. If at times she feels a blank at her heart, or if a thought intrudes that her lot in life is poor and joyless—and such thoughts, I suspect, do intrude—she never shows it. But Maria, with a narrow income and an increasing family, has too much to do to have time to be very un-

happy. She is much addicted to preaching against poetry and romance :

“ With a hoard of little maxims preaching down a daughter's heart.”

It always seems to me as if poor Maria preached with the eagerness of one trying to convince herself that she has been right when she fears she may have been wrong. Her husband is a happy man, according to his capacities. His veneration for his wife's wisdom and talents is unbounded. Altogether, I believe, her happiness is about equal to the average. Mrs. Lillie's husband, by his low dissipated habits, leads her rather a sad life, or at least what would be a sad life to any other woman ; but Jane consoles herself by dressing fine, and going out to parties, and talking of her carriage, and her new grand-piano, “ which cost a *mint*.” I believe it is expected by their neighbours, that ere long they will become insolvent. Mr. and Mrs. Purves, senior, are little changed. The latter is larger, and coarser, and redder than ever, and the former a little greyer, but thin, small, fidgetty, brisk, and consequential as ever. Mrs. Purves is engaged in the congenial occupation

of getting matches for her younger daughters—but hitherto without success.

George Smythe has relapsed into the lazy, useless, affected, though good-natured man of fashion he was when we first knew him. He still considers Mrs. Malcolm Gordon peerless among women ; but he is amazed to think how he could have ever been so much in love. “What a bore it was ! What an immensity of fatigue and trouble her rejection had spared him !”

When I last heard of Sir Arthur Cornish, he had just been married to a young, beautiful, and well-dowered lady, the daughter of a duke, possessed of considerable political influence. Sir Arthur is now considered a rising man in the political world, and his speeches in Parliament are thought clever and eloquent ; but not by me, for they always seem to me deficient in the glow of genuine benevolence, and the persuasive earnestness of truth. “Is he happy ?” methinks I hear a very moral reader ask, and “is it teaching a good moral, to leave the wicked in prosperity ?” To this I shall only answer, that in looking around me on

the apparently strange moral chaos which we call "the world," I find that, as the preacher says, "All things come alike to all." Now whatsoever is true *must* be moral, and I *dare* not paint life different from what it appears to me. "Shall a man be more just than God?" I shall conclude by putting a question in my turn:—Can the cold-hearted, the selfish, and the callous, ever be happy? If we could see into the heart, perhaps we should find that retribution visits as certainly the wicked inhabitant of a gilded palace as the sordid wretch whose crimes have brought him to a dungeon, and that as sure an order prevails in the moral as in the physical universe.

As Malcolm Gordon read aloud to his wife, from the newspaper, an account of the wedding festivities at Harbury and —— Castle, the seat of the bride's father, together with the name of the bishop who performed the ceremony, and the long list of the noble and distinguished guests who were present, Caroline pressed her husband's hand, saying, while her eyes swam with tears—

"Poor thing! God help her!"

And "God help her, indeed!" Malcolm answered; adding, in a low heartfelt tone of sadness — "Poor Violet!"

As he spoke, he returned, with fervent tenderness, the pressure of the hand which yet rested in his.

THE END.

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